THE WHITE WOLF

AND OTHER FIRESIDE TALES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Dead Man's Rock
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Old Fires and Profitable Ghosts
The Oxford Book of English Verse
The Laird's Luck
The Westcotes

THE WHITE WOLF

AND OTHER FIRESIDE TALES

BY

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THE MIRACLE OF THE *WHITE WOLF*

I.—THE TALE OF SNORRI GAMLASON

IN the early summer of 1358, with the breaking up of the ice, there came to Brattahlid, in Greenland, a merchant-ship from Norway, with provisions for the Christian settlements on the coast. The master's name was Snorri Gamlason, and it happened that as he sailed into Eric's Fiord and warped alongside the quay, word was brought to him that the Bishop of Garda had arrived that day in Brattahlid, to hold a confirmation. Whereupon this Snorri went ashore at once, and, getting audience of the Bishop, gave him a little book, with an account of how he had come by it.

The book was written in Danish, and Snorri could not understand a word of it, being indeed unable to read or to write; but he told this tale:—

His ship, about three weeks before, had run into a calm, which lasted for three days and two nights, and with a northerly drift she fell away, little by little, towards a range of icebergs which stretched across and ahead of them in a solid chain. But about noon of the third day the colour of the sky warned him of a worse peril, and soon there came

up from the westward a bank of fog, with snow in it, and a wind that increased until they began to hear the ice grinding and breaking up—as it seemed —all around them. Snorri steered at first for the southward, where had been open water; but by and by found that even here were drifting bergs. He therefore put his helm down and felt his way through the weather by short boards, and so, with the most of his men stationed forward to keep a look-out, fenced, as it were, with the danger, steering and tacking, until by God's grace the fog lifted, and the wind blew gently once more.

And now in the clear sunshine he saw that the storm had been more violent than any had supposed; since the wall of ice, which before had been solid, was now burst and riven in many places, and in particular to the eastward, where a broad path of water lay before them almost like a canal, but winding here and there. Towards this Snorri steered, and entered it with a fair breeze.

They had come, he said, but to the second bend of this waterway, when a seaman, who had climbed the mast on the chance of spying an outlet, called out in surprise that there was a ship ahead of them, but two miles off, and running down the channel before the wind, even as they. At first he found no credit for this tale, and even when those on deck spied her mast and yard overtopping a gap between two bergs, they could only set it down for a mirage or cheat of eyesight in the clear weather.

But by and by, said Snorri, they could not doubt they were in chase of a ship, and, further, that they were fast overtaking her. For she steered with no

method, and shook with every slant of wind, and anon went off before it like a helpless thing, until in the end she was fetched up by the jutting foot of a berg, and there shook her sail, flapping with such noise that Snorri's men heard it, though yet a mile away.

They bore down upon her, and now took note that this sail of hers was ragged and frozen, so that it flapped like a jointed board, and that her rigging hung in all ways and untended, but stiff with rime; and drawing yet nearer, they saw an ice-line about her hull, so deep that her timbers seemed bitten through, and a great pile of frozen snow upon her poop, banked even above her tiller; but no helmsman, and no living soul upon her.

Then Snorri let lower his boat, and was rowed towards her; and, coming alongside, gave a hail, which was unanswered. But from the frozen pile by the tiller there stuck out a man's arm, ghastly to see. Snorri climbed on board by the waist, where her sides were low and a well reached aft from the mast to the poop. There was a cabin beneath the poop, and another and larger room under the deck forward, between the step of the mast and the bows. Into each of these he broke with axes and bars, and in the one found nothing but some cooking-pots and bedding; but in the other—that is, the after-cabin —the door, as he burst it in, almost fell against a young man seated by a bed. So life-like was he that Snorri called aloud in the doorway, but anon, peering into the gloomy place, perceived the body to be frozen upright and stiff, and that on the bed lay another body, of a lady slight and young, and

very fair. She, too, was dead and frozen; yet her cheeks, albeit white as the pillow against which they rested, had not lost their roundness. Snorri took note also of her dress and of the coverlet reaching from the bed's foot to her waist, that they were of silk for the most part, and richly embroidered, and her shift and the bed-sheets about her of fine linen. The man's dress was poor and coarse by comparison; yet he carried a sword, and was plainly of gentle nurture. The sword Snorri drew from its sheath and brought away; also he took a small box of jewels; but little else could he find on the ship, and no food of any kind.

His design was to leave the ship as he found it, carrying away only these tokens that his story, when he arrived at Brattahlid, might be received with faith; and to direct where the ship might be sought for. But as he quitted the cabin some of his men shouted from the deck, where they had discovered yet another body frozen in a drift. This was an old man seated with crossed legs and leaning against the mast, having an ink-horn slung about his neck, and almost hidden by his grey beard, and on his knee a book, which he held with a thumb frozen between two pages.

This was the book which Snorri had brought to Brattahlid, and which the Bishop of Garda read aloud to him that same afternoon, translating as he went; the ink being fresh, the writing clerkly, and scarcely a page damaged by the weather. It bore no title; but the Bishop, who afterwards caused his secretary to take a copy of the tale, gave it a very long one, beginning: "God's mercy shown in a Miracle upon

certain castaways from Jutland, at the Feast of the Nativity of His Blessed Son, our Lord, in the year MCCCLVII., whereby He made dead trees to put forth in leaf, and comforted desperate men with summer in the midst of the Frozen Sea" . . . with much beside. But all this appears in the tale, which I will head only with the name of the writer.

II.—PETER KURT'S MANUSCRIPT[1]

Now that our troubles are over, and I sit by the mast of our late unhappy ship, not knowing if I am on earth or in paradise, but full-fed and warm in all my limbs, yea pierced and glowing with the love of Almighty God, I am resolved to take pen and use my unfrozen ink in telling out of what misery His hand hath led us to this present Eden.

I who write this am Peter Kurt, and I was the steward of my master Ebbe while he dwelt in his own castle of Nebbegaard. Poor he was then, and poor, I suppose, he is still in all but love and the favour of God; but in those days the love was but an old servant's (to wit, my own), and the favour of God not evident, but the poverty, on the other hand, bitterly apparent in all our housekeeping.

We lived alone, with a handful of servants—some-

[1] The courtship of Ebbe, the poor esquire of Nebbegaard, and the maiden Mette is a traditional tale of West Jutland. A version of it was Englished by Thorpe from Carit Etlar's "*Eventyr og Folkesagen fra Jylland*": but this, while it tells of Ebbe's adventures at the "Bride-show," and afterwards at the hunting-party, contains no account of the lovers' escape and voyage, or of the miracle which brought them comfort at the last. Indeed, Master Kurt contradicts the common tale in many ways, but above all in his ending, wherein (although he narrates a miracle) I find him worthy of belief.

times as few as three—in the castle which stands between the sandhills and the woods, as you sail into Veile Fiord. All these woods, as far away as to Rosenvold, had been the good knight his father's, but were lost to us before Ebbe's birth, and leased on pledge to the Knight Borre, of Egeskov, of whom I am to tell; and with them went all the crew of verderers, huntsmen, grooms, prickers, and ostringers that had kept Nebbegaard cheerful the year round. His mother had died at my master's birth, and the knight himself but two years after, so that the lad grew up in his poverty with no heritage but a few barren acres of sand, a tumbling house, and his father's sword, and small prospect of winning the broad lands out of Borre's clutches.

Nevertheless, under my tutoring he grew into a tall lad and a bold, a good swordsman, skilful at the tilt and in handling a boat; but not talkative or free in his address of strangers. The most of his days he spent in fishing, or in the makingand mending of gear; and his evenings, after our lesson in sword-play, in the reading of books (of which Nebbegaard had good store), and specially of the Icelanders, skalds and sagamen; also at times in the study of Latin with me, who had been bred to the priesthood, but left it for love of his father, my foster-brother, and now had no ambition of my own but to serve this lad and make him as good a man.

But there were days when he would have naught to do with fishing or with books; dark days when I forbore and left him to mope by the dunes, or in the great garden which had been his mother's, but was

now a wilderness untended. And it was then that he first met with the lady Mette.

For as he walked there one morning, a little before noon, a swift shadow passed overhead between him and the sun, and almost before he could glance upward a body came dropping out of the sky and fell with a thud among the rose-bushes by the eastern wall. It was a heron, and after it swooped the bird which had murdered it; a white ger-falcon of the kind which breeds in Greenland, but a trained bird, as he knew by the sound of the bells on her legs as she plunged through the bushes. Ebbe ran at once to the corner where the birds struggled; but as he picked up the pelt he happened to glance towards the western wall, and in the gateway there stood a maiden with her hand on the bridle of a white palfrey. Her dog came running towards Ebbe as he stood. He beat it off, and carrying the pelt across to its mistress, waited a moment silently, cap in hand, while she called the great falcon back to its lure and leashed it to her wrist, which seemed all too slight for the weight.

Then, as Ebbe held out the dead heron, she shook her head and laughed. "I am not sure, sir, that I have any right to it. We flushed it yonder between the wood and the sandhills, and, though I did not stay to consider, I think it must belong to the owner of the shore-land."

"It is true," said Ebbe, "that I own the shore-land, and the forest, too, if law could enforce right. But for the bird you are welcome to it, and to as many more as you care to kill."

Upon this she knit her brows. "The forest?

But I thought that the forest was my father's? My name," said she, "is Mette, and my father is the Knight Borre, of Egeskov."

"I am Ebbe of Nebbegaard, and," said he, perceiving the mirth in her eyes, "you have heard the rhyme upon me—

> "'Ebbe from Nebbe, with all his men good,
> Has neither food nor firing-wood.'"

"I had not meant to be discourteous," said she contritely; "but tell me more of these forest-lands."

"Nay," answered Ebbe, "hither comes riding your father with his men. Ask him for the story, and when he has told it you may know why I cannot make him or his daughter welcome at Nebbegaard."

To this she made no reply, but with her hand on the palfrey's bridle went slowly back to meet her father, who reined up at a little distance and waited, offering Ebbe no salutation. Then a groom helped her to the saddle, and the company rode away towards Egeskov, leaving the lad with the dead bird in his hand.

For weeks after this meeting he moped more than usual. He had known before that Sir Borre would leave no son, and that the lands of Nebbegaard, if ever to be won back, must be wrested from a woman—and this had ever troubled him. It troubled me the less because I hoped there might be another way than force; and even if it should come to that, Sir Borre's past treachery had killed in me all kindness towards his house, male or female.

He and my old master and five other knights of the eastern coast had been heavily oppressed by the Lord of Trelde, Lars Trolle, who owned many ships, and, though no better than a pirate, claimed a right of levying tribute along the shore that faces Fünen, upon pretence of protecting it. After enduring many raids and paying toll under threat for years, these seven knights banded together to rid themselves of this robber; but word of their meetings being carried to Trolle, he came secretly one night to Nebbegaard with three ships' crews, broke down the doors, and finding the seven assembled in debate, made them prisoners and held them at ransom. My master, a poor man, could only purchase release by the help of his comrade, Borre, who found the ransom, but took in exchange the lands of Nebbegaard, to hold them until repaid out of their revenues; but of these he could never after be brought to give an account. We on our side had lost the power to enforce it, and behind his own strength he could now threaten us with Lars Trolle's, to whom he had been reconciled.

Therefore I felt no tenderness for Sir Borre's house, if by any means our estates could be recovered. But after this meeting with Sir Borre's daughter, I could see that my young lord went heavily troubled; and I began to think of other means than force.

It may have been six months later that word came to us of great stir and bustle at Egeskov. Sir Borre, being aged, and anxious to see his daughter married before he died, had proclaimed a Bride-show. Now the custom is, and the rule,

that any suitor (so he be of gentle birth) may offer himself in these contests; nor will the parents begin to bargain until he has approved himself, —a wise plan, since it lessens the disputing, which else might be endless. So when this news reached us I looked at my master, and he, perceiving what I would say, answered it.

"If Holgar will carry me," said he, "we will ride to Egeskov."

This Holgar was a stout roan horse, foaled at Nebbegaard, but now well advanced in years, and the last of that red stock for which our stables had been famous.

"He will carry you thither," said I; "and by God's grace, bring you home with a bride behind you."

Upon this my master hung his head. "Peter," he said, "do not think I attempt this because it is the easier way."

"It comes easier than fighting with a woman," I answered. "But you will find it hard enow when the old man begins to haggle."

I did not know then that the lad's heart was honestly given to this maid; but so it was, and had been from the moment when she stood before him in the gateway.

So to Egeskov we rode, and there found no less than forty suitors assembled, and some with a hundred servants in retinue. Sir Borre received us with no care to hide his scorn, though the hour had not come for putting it into words; and truly my master's arms were old-fashioned, and with the dents they had honourably taken when

they cased his father, made a poor battered show, for all my scouring.

Nevertheless, I had no fear when his turn came to ride the ring. Three rides had each wooer under the lady Mette's eyes, and three rings Ebbe carried off and laid on the cushion before her. She stooped and passed about his neck the gold chain which she held for the prize; but I think they exchanged no looks. Only one other rider brought two rings, and this was a son of Lars Trolle, Olaf by name, a tall young knight, and well-favoured, but disdainful; whom I knew Sir Borre must favour if he could.

I could not see that the maiden favoured him above the rest, yet I kept a close eye upon this youth, and must own that in the jousting which followed he carried himself well. For this the most of the wooers had fresh horses, and I drew a long breath when, at the close of the third course, my master, with two others, remained in the lists. For it had been announced to us that the last courses should be ridden on the morrow. But now Sir Borre behaved very treacherously, for perceiving (as I am sure) that the horse Holgar was overwearied and panting, he gave word that the sport should not be stayed. More by grace of Heaven it was than by force of riding that Ebbe unhorsed his next man, a knight's son from Smalling; but in the last course, which he rode against Olaf of Trolle, who had stood a bye, his good honest beast came to the tilt-cloth with knees trembling, and at a touch rolled over, though between the two lances (I will swear) there was

nothing to choose. I was quick to pick up my dear lad; but he would have none of my comfort, and limped away from the lists as one who had borne himself shamefully. Yea, and my own heart was hot as I led Holgar back to stable, without waiting to see the prize claimed by one who, though a fair fighter, had not won it without foul aid.

Having stalled Holgar I had much ado to find his master again, and endless work to persuade him to quit his sulks and join the other suitors in the hall that night, when each presented his bride-gift. Even when I had won him over, he refused to take the coffer I placed in his hands, though it held his mother's jewels, few but precious. But entering with the last, as became his humble rank of esquire, he laid nothing at the lady's feet save his sword and the chain that she herself had given him.

"You bring little, Squire Ebbe," said the Knight Borre, from his seat beside his daughter.

"I bring what is most precious in the world to me," said Ebbe.

"Your lance is broken, I believe?" said the old knight scornfully.

"My lance is not broken," he answered; "else you should have it to match your word." And rising, without a look at Mette, whose eyes were downcast, he strode back to the door.

I had now given up hope, for the maid showed no sign of kindness, and the old man and the youth were like two dogs—the very sight of the one set the other growling. Yet—since to leave in a

huff would have been discourteous—I prevailed on my master to bide over the morrow, and even to mount Holgar and ride forth to the hunt which was to close the Bride-show. He mounted, indeed, but kept apart and well behind Mette and her brisk group of wooers. For, apart from his lack of inclination, his horse was not yet recovered; and by and by, as the prickers started a deer, the hunt swept ahead of him and left him riding alone.

He had a mind to turn aside and ride straight back to Nebbegaard, whither he had sent me on to announce him (and dismally enough I obeyed), when at the end of a green glade he spied Mette returning alone on her white palfrey.

"For I am tired of this hunting," she told him, as she came near. "And you? Does it weary you also, that you lag so far behind?"

"It would never weary me," he answered; "but I have a weary horse."

"Then let us exchange," said she. "Though mine is but a palfrey, it would carry you better. Your roan betrayed you yesterday, and it is better to borrow than to miss excelling."

"My house," answered Ebbe, still sulkily, "has had enough borrowing of Egeskov; and my horse may be valueless, but he is one of the few things dear to me, and I must keep him."

"Truly then," said she, "your words were nought, last night, when you professed to offer me the gifts most precious to you in the world."

And before he could reply to this, she had pricked on and was lost in the woodland.

Ebbe sat for a while as she left him, considering,

at the crossing of two glades. Then he twitched Holgar's rein and turned back towards Nebbegaard. But at the edge of the wood, spying a shepherd seated below in the plain by his flock, he rode down to the man, and called to him and said—

"Go this evening to Egeskov and greet the lady Mette, and say to her that Ebbe of Nebbegaard could not barter his good horse, the last of his father's stable. But that she may know he was honest in offering her the thing most precious to him, tell her further what thou hast seen."

So saying, he alighted off Holgar, and, smoothing his neck, whispered a word in his ear. And the old horse turned his muzzle and rubbed it against his master's left palm, whose right gripped a dagger and drove it straight for the heart. This was the end of the roan stock of Nebbegaard.

My master Ebbe reached home that night with the mire thick on his boots. Having fed him, I went to the stables, and finding no Holgar made sure that he had killed the poor beast in wrath for his discomforture at the tilt. The true reason he gave me many days after. I misjudged him, judging him by his father's temper.

On the morrow of the Bride-show the suitors took their leave of Egeskov, under promise to return again at the month's end and hear how the lady Mette had chosen. So they went their ways, none doubting that the fortunate one would be Olaf of Trelde; and, for me, I blamed myself that we had ever gone to Egeskov.

But on the third morning after the Bride-show I changed this advice very suddenly; for going at

six of the morning to unlock our postern gate, as my custom was, I found a tall black stallion tethered there and left without a keeper. His harness was of red leather, and each broad crimson rein bore certain words embroidered: on the one "A Straight Quarrel is Soonest Mended"; on the other, "Who Will Dare Learns Swiftness."

Little time I lost in calling my master to admire, and having read what was written, he looked in my eyes and said, "I go back to Egeskov."

"That is well done," said I; "may the Almighty God prosper it!"

"But," said he doubtfully, "if I determine on a strange thing, will you help me, Peter? I may need a dozen men; men without wives to miss them."

"I can yet find a dozen such along the fiord," I answered.

"And we go on a long journey, perhaps never to return to Nebbegaard."

"Dear master," said I, "what matter where my old bones lie after they have done serving you?" He kissed me and rode away to Egeskov.

"I thought that the Squire of Nebbe had done with us," Sir Borre began to sneer, when Ebbe found audience. "But the Bride-show is over, my man, and I give not my answer for a month yet."

"Your word is long to pledge, and longer to redeem," said Ebbe. "I know that, were I to wait a twelvemonth, you would not of free will give me Mette."

"Ah, you know that, do you? Well, then, you

are right, Master Lackland, and the greater your impudence in hoping to wile from me through my daughter what you could not take by force."

Ebbe replied, "I was prepared to find it difficult, but let that pass. As touching my lack of land, I have Nebbegaard left; a poor estate and barren, yet I think you would be glad of it, to add to the lands of which you robbed us."

"Well," said Borre, "I would give a certain price for it, but not my daughter, nor anything near so precious to me."

"Give me one long ship," said Ebbe; "the swiftest of your seven which ride in the strait between Egeskov and Stryb. You shall take Nebbegaard for her, since I am weary of living at home and care little to live at all without Mette."

Borre's eyes shone with greed. "I commend you," said he; "for a stout lad there is nothing like risking his life to win a fortune. Give me the deeds belonging to Nebbegaard, and you shall have my ship *Gold Mary*."

"By your leave," said Ebbe, "I have spent some time in watching your ships upon the fiord; and the ship in my mind was the *White Wolf*."

Sir Borre laughed to find himself outwitted, for the *White Wolf* could outsail all his fleet. But in any case he had the better of the bargain and could afford to show some good-humour. Moreover, though he knew not that Mette had any tenderness for this youth, his spirits rose at the prospect of getting him out of the way.

So the bargain was struck, and as Nebbe rode homewards to his castle for the last time, he met

the shepherd who had taken his former message. The man was waiting for him, and (as you guess) by Mette's orders.

"Tell the lady Mette," said Ebbe, "that I have sold Nebbegaard for the *White Wolf*, and that two nights from now my men will be aboard of her; also that I sup with her father that evening before the boat takes me off from the Bent Ness."

So it was that two nights later Ebbe supped at Egeskov, and was kept drinking by the old knight for an hour maybe after the lady Mette had risen and left the hall for her own room.

And at the end, after the last speeding-cup, needs must Sir Borre (who had grown friendly beyond all belief) see him to the gate and stand there bare-headed among his torch-bearers while my master mounted the black stallion that was to bear him to Bent Ness, three miles away, where I waited with the boat.

But as Ebbe shook his rein, and moved out of the torchlight, came the damsel Mette stealing out of the shadow upon the far side of the horse. He reached down a hand, and she took it, and sprang up behind him.

"For this bout, Sir Borre, I came with a fresh horse!" called my master blithely; and so, striking spur, galloped off into the dark.

Little chance had Sir Borre to overtake them. The stallion was swift, our boat waiting in the lee of the Ness, the wind southerly and fresh, the *White Wolf* ready for sea, with sail hoisted and but one small anchor to get on board or cut away if need were. But there was no need. Before the

men of Egeskov reached the Ness and found there the black stallion roaming, its riders were sailing out of the Strait with a merry breeze. So began our voyage.

My master was minded to sail for Norway and take service under the king. But first, coming to the island of Laesö, he must put ashore and seek a priest, by whom he and the lady Mette were safely made man and wife. Two days he spent at the island, and then, with fresh store of provisions, we headed northward again.

It was past Skagen that our troubles began, with a furious wind from the north-east against which there was no contending, so that we ran from it and were driven for two days and a night into the wide sea. Even when it lessened, the wind held in the east; and we, who could handle the ship, but knew little of reckoning, crept northward again in the hope to sight the coast of Norway. For two days we held on at this, lying close by the wind, and in good spirits, although our progress was not much; but on the third blew another gale—this time from the south-east—and for a week gale followed gale, and we went in deadly peril, yet never losing hope. The worst was the darkness, for the year was now drawing towards Yule, and as we pressed farther north we lost almost all sight of the sun.

At length, with the darkness and the bitter cold and our stores running low, we resolved to let the wind take us with what swiftness it might to whatsoever land it listed; and so ran westward, with darkness closing upon us, and famine and a great despair.

But the lady Mette did not lose heart, and the worst of all (our failing cupboard) we kept from her, so that she never lacked for plenty. Truly her cheerfulness paid us back, and her love for my master, the like of which I had not seen in this world; no, nor dreamed of. Hand in hand this pair would sit, watching the ice which was our prison and the great North Lights, she close against Ebbe's side for warmth, and (I believe) as happy as a bird; he trembling for the end. The worst was to see her at table, pressing food to his mouth and wondering at his little hunger; while his whole body cried out for the meat, only it could not be spared.

Though she must know soon, none of us had the heart to tell her; and not out of pity alone, but because with her must die out the last spark by which we warmed ourselves.

But there came a morning—I write it as of a time long ago, and yet it was but yesterday, praise be unto God!—there came a morning when I awoke and found that two of our men had died in the night, of frost and famine. They must be hidden before my mistress discovered aught; and so before her hour of waking we weighted and dropped the bodies overside into deep water; for the ice had not yet wholly closed about us. Now as I stooped, I suppose that my legs gave way beneath me. At any rate, I fell; and in falling struck my head against the bulwarks, and opened my eyes in that unending dusk to find the lady Mette stooping over me.

Then somehow I was aware that she had called

for wine to force down my throat, and had been told that there was no wine; and also that with this answer had come to her the knowledge, full and sudden, of our case. Better had we done to trust her than to hide it all this while, for she turned to Ebbe, who stood at her shoulder, and "Is not this the feast of Yule?" she asked. My master bent his head, but without answering.

"Ah!" she cried to him. "Now I know what I have longed to know, that your love is less than mine, for you can love yet be doubtful of miracles; while to me, now that I have loved, no miracle can be aught but small." She bowed herself over me. "Art dying, old friend? Look up and learn that God, being Love, deserts not lovers."

Then she stooped and gathered, as I thought, a handful of snow from the deck; but lo! when she pressed it to my lips, and I tasted, it was heavenly manna.

And looking up past her face I saw the ribbons of the North Lights fade in a great and wide sunlight, bathing the deck and my frozen limbs. Nor did they feel it only, but on the wind came the noise of bergs rending, springs breaking, birds singing, many and curious. And with that, as I am a sinful man, I gazed up into green leaves; for either we had sailed into Paradise or the timbers of the *White Wolf* were swelling with sap and pushing forth bough upon bough. Yea, and there were roses at the mast's foot, and my fingers, as I stretched them, dabbled in mosses. While I lay there, breathing softly, as one who dreams and fears to awake, I heard her voice talking among the noises

of birds and brooks, and by the scent it seemed to be in a garden; but whether it spake to me or to Ebbe I knew not, nor cared. "The Lord is my Shepherd, and guides me," it said, "wherefore I lack nothing. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me by comfortable streams: He reviveth my soul. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no harm: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." But, a little after, I knew that the voice spake to my master, for it said: "Let us go forth into the field, O beloved: let us lodge in the villages: let us get up betimes to the vineyard and see if the vine have budded, if its blossom be open, the pomegranates in flower. Even there will I give thee my love." Then looking again I saw that the two had gone from me and left me alone.

But, blessed be God, they took not away the vision, and now I know certainly that it is no cheat. For here sit I, dipping my pen into the unfrozen ink, and, when a word will not come, looking up into the broad branches and listening to the birds till I forget my story. It is long since they left me; but I am full fed, and the ship floats pleasantly. After so much misery I am as one rocked on the bosom of God; and the pine resin has a pleasant smell.

SINDBAD ON BURRATOR

I HEARD this story in a farmhouse upon Dartmoor, and I give it in the words of the local doctor who told it. We were a reading-party of three undergraduates and a Christ Church don. The don had slipped on a boulder, two days before, while fishing the river Meavy, and sprained his ankle; hence Dr. Miles's visit. The two had made friends over the don's fly-book and the discovery that what the doctor did not know about Dartmoor trout was not worth knowing; hence an invitation to extend his visit over dinner. At dinner the talk diverged from sport to the ancient tin-works, stone circles, camps and cromlechs on the tors about us, and from there to touch speculatively on the darker side of the old religions: hence at length the doctor's story, which he told over the pipes and whisky, leaning his arms upon the table and gazing at it rather than at us, as though drawing his memories out of depths below its polished surface.

It must be thirty—yes, thirty—years ago (he said) since I met the man, on a bright November morning, when the Dartmoor hounds were drawing Burrator Wood. Burrator House in those days

belonged to the Rajah Brooke—Brooke of Sarawak —who had bought it from Harry Terrell; or rather it had been bought for him by the Baroness Burdett Coutts and other admirers in England. Harry Terrell—a great sportsman in his day—had been loth enough to part with it, and when the bargain was first proposed, had named at random a price which was about double what he had given for the place. The Rajah closed with the sum at once, asked him to make a list of everything in the house, and put a price on whatever he cared to sell. Terrell made a full list, putting what seemed to him fair prices on most of the furniture, and high ones—prohibitive he thought—on the sticks he had a fancy to keep. The Rajah glanced over the paper in his grand manner, and says he, "I'll take it all." "Stop! stop!" cried Terrell, "I bain't going to let you have the bed I was married in!" "As you please; we'll strike out the bed, then," the Rajah answered. That is how he took possession.

Burrator House, as I daresay you know, faces across the Meavy upon Burrator Wood; and the wood, thanks to Terrell, had always been a sure draw for a fox. I had tramped over from Tavistock on this particular morning,—for I was new to the country, a young man looking around me for a practice, and did not yet possess a horse,—and I sat on the slope above the house, at the foot of the tor, watching the scene on the opposite bank. The fixture, always a favourite one, and the Rajah's hospitality—which was noble, like everything about him—had brought out a large and brightly-dressed

field; and among them, in his black coat, moved Terrell on a horse twice as good as it looked. He had ridden over from his new home, and I daresay in the rush of old associations had forgotten for the while that the familiar place was no longer his.

The Rajah, a statue of a man, sat on a tall grey at the covert's edge, directly below me; and from time to time I watched him through my field-glass. He had lately recovered from a stroke of paralysis, and was (I am told) the wreck of his old self; but the old fire lived in the ashes. He sat there, tall, lean, upright as a ramrod, with his eyes turned from the covert and gazing straight in front, over his horse's ears, on the rushing Meavy. He had forgotten the hounds; his care for his guests was at an end; and I wondered what thoughts, what memories of the East, possessed him. There is always a loneliness about a great man, don't you think? But I have never felt one to be so terribly —yes, terribly — alone as the Rajah was that morning among his guests and the Devonshire tors.

"Every inch a king," said a voice at my elbow, and a little man settled himself down on the turf beside me. I set down my glasses with a start. He was a spare dry fellow of about fifty, dressed in what I took for the working suit of a mechanic. Certainly he did not belong to the moor. He wore no collar, but a dingy yellow handkerchief knotted about his throat, and both throat and face were seamed with wrinkles — so thickly seamed that at first glance you might take them for tattoo-marks; but I had time for a second, for

without troubling to meet my eyes he nodded towards the Rajah.

"I've cut a day's work and travelled out from Plymouth to get a sight of him; and I've a wife will pull my hair out when I get home and she finds I haven't been to the docks to-day; and I've had no breakfast but thirty grains of opium; but he's worth it."

"Thirty grains of opium!" I stared at him, incredulous. He did not turn, but, still with his eyes on the valley below us, stretched out a hand. It's fingers were gnarled, and hooked like a bird's claw, and on the little finger a ruby flashed in the morning sunlight—not a large ruby, but of the purest pigeon's-blood shade, and in any case a stone of price.

"You see this? My wife thinks it a sham one, but it's not. And some day, when I'm drunk or in low water, I shall part with it—but not yet. You've an eye for it, I see,"—and yet he was not looking towards me,—"but the Rajah, yonder, and I are the only two within a hundred miles that can read what's in the heart of it."

He gazed for a second or two at the stone, lifted it to his ear as if listening, and lowering his hand to the turf, bent over it and gazed again. "Ay, *he* could understand and see into you, my beauty! *He* could hear the little drums tum-a-rumbling, and the ox-bells and bangles tinkling, and the shuffle of the elephants going by; *he* could read the lust in you, and the blood and the sun flickering and licking round the *kris* that spilt it—for it's the devil you have in you,

my dear. But we know you—he and I—he and I. Ah! there you go," he muttered as the hounds broke into cry, and the riders swept round the edge of the copse towards the sound of a view-halloo. "There you go," he nodded after the Rajah; "but ride as you will, the East is in you, great man—its gold in your blood, its dust in your eyelids, its own stink in your nostril; and, ride as you will, you can never escape it."

He clasped his knees and leaned back against the slope, following the grey horse and its rider with idolatrous gaze; and I noted that one of the clasped hands lacked the two middle fingers.

"You know him?" I asked. "You have seen him out there, at Sarawak?"

"I never saw him; but I heard of him." He smiled to himself. "It's not easy to pass certain gates in the East without hearing tell of the Rajah Brooke."

For a while he sat nursing his knee while I filled and lit a pipe. Then he turned abruptly, and over the flame of the match I saw his eyes, the pupils clouded around the iris and, as it were, withdrawn inward and away from the world. "Ever heard of Cagayan Sulu?" he asked.

"Never," said I. "Who or what is it?"

"It's an island," said he. "It lies a matter of eighty miles off the north-east corner of Borneo—facing Sandakan, as you might say."

"Who owns it?

He seemed to be considering the question. "Well," he answered slowly, "if you asked the Spanish Government I suppose they'd tell you the

King of Spain; but that's a lie. If you asked the natives—the Hadji Hamid, for instance—you'd be told it belonged to them; and that's half a lie. And if you asked the Father of Lies he might tell you the truth and call me for witness. I lost two fingers there—the only English flesh ever buried in those parts—so I've bought my knowledge."

"How did you come there?" I asked,—"if it's a fair question."

He chuckled without mirth. "As it happens, that's *not* a fair question. But I'll tell you this much, I came there with a brass band."

I began to think the man out of his mind.

"With the instruments, that is. I'd dropped the bandmaster on the way. Look here," he went on sharply, "the beginning is funny enough, but I'm telling you no lies. We'll suppose there was a ship, a British man-of-war—name not necessary just now."

"I think I understand," I nodded.

"Oh no, you don't," said he. "I'm not a deserter—at least not exactly—or I shouldn't be telling this to you. Well, we'll suppose this ship bound from Labuan to Hong-Kong with orders to keep along the north side of Borneo, to start with, and do a bit of exploring by the way. This would be in 'forty-nine, when the British Government had just taken over Labuan. *Very* good. Next we'll suppose the captain puts in at Kudat, in Marudu Bay, to pay a polite call on the Rajah there or some understrapper of the Sultan's, and takes his ship's band ashore by way of compliment, and that the band gets too drunk to play 'Annie Laurie.'" He

chuckled again. "I never saw such a band as we were, down by the water's edge; and O'Hara, the bandmaster, took on and played the fool to such a tune, while we waited for the boat to take us aboard, that for the very love I bore him I had to knock him down and sit on him in a quiet corner.

"While I sat keeping guard on him I must have dropped asleep myself; for the next I remember was waking up to find the beach deserted and the boat gone. This put me in a sweat, of course; but after groping some while about the foreshore (which was as dark as the inside of your hat), I tripped over a rope and so found a native boat. O'Hara wouldn't wake, so I just lifted him on board like a sack, tossed in his cornet and my bombardon, tumbled in on top of them, and started to row for dear life towards the ship's light in the offing.

"But the Rajah, or rather his servants, had filled us up with a kind of sticky drink that only begins to work when you think it about time to leave off. I must have pulled miles towards that ship, and every time I cast an eye over my shoulder her light was shining just as far away as ever. At last I remember feeling sure I was bewitched, and with that I must have tumbled off the thwart in a sound sleep.

"When I awoke I had both arms round the bombardon; there wasn't a sight of land, or of the ship, anywhere; and, if you please, the sun was near sinking! This time I managed to wake up O'Hara. We had splitting headaches, the pair of us; but we snatched up our instruments and started to blow on them like mad. Not a soul heard, though

we blew till the sweat poured down us, and kept up the concert pretty well all through the night. You may think it funny, and I suppose we did amount to something like a joke—we two bandsmen booming away at the Popular Airs of Old England and the Huntsmen's Chorus under those everlasting stars. You wouldn't say so, if you had been the audience when O'Hara broke down and began to confess his sins.

"Luckily the sea kept smooth, and next morning I took the oars in earnest. We had no compass, and I was famished; but I stuck to it, steering by the sun and pulling in the direction where I supposed land to lie. O'Hara kept a look-out. We saw nothing, however, and down came the night again.

"Though the hunger had been gnawing and griping me for hours, yet—dog-tired as I was—I curled myself at the bottom of the boat and slept, and dreamed I was on board ship again and in my hammock. A sort of booming in my ears awoke me. Looking up I saw daylight around—clear morning light and blue sky—and right overhead, as it were, a great cliff standing against the blue. And there in the face of day O'Hara sat on the thwart, tugging like mad, now cricking his neck almost to stare up at the cliff, and now grinning down at me in silly triumph.

"With that I caught at the meaning of the sound in my ears. 'You infernal fool!' I shouted, staggering up and making to snatch the paddle from him. 'Get her nose round to it and back her!' For it was the noise of breaking water.

"But I was too late. Our boat, I must tell you,

was a sort of Dutch pram, about twelve feet long and narrowing at the bows, which stood well out of water; handy enough for beaching, but not to be taken through breakers, by reason of its sitting low in the stern. O'Hara, as I yelled at him, pulled his starboard paddle and brought her (for these prams spin round easily) almost broadside on to a tall comber. As we slid up the side of it and hung there, I had a glimpse of a steep clean fissure straight through the wall of rock ahead; and in that instant O'Hara sprawled his arms and toppled overboard. The boat and I went by him with a rush. I saw a hand and wrist lifted above the foam, but when I looked back for them they were gone—gone as I shot over the bar and through the cleft into smooth water. I shouted and pulled back to the edge of the breakers; but he was gone, and I never saw him again.

"I suppose it was ten minutes before I took heart to look about me. I was floating on a lake of the bluest water I ever set eyes on, and as calm as a pond except by the entrance where the spent waves, after tumbling over the bar, spread themselves in long ripples, widening and widening until the edge of them melted and they were gone. The banks of the lake rose sheer from its edge, or so steeply that I saw no way of climbing them—walls you might call them, a good hundred feet high, and widening gradually towards the top, but in a circle as regular as ever you could draw with a pair of compasses. Any fool could see what had happened —that here was the crater of a dead volcano, one side of which had been broken into by the sea; but

the beauty of it, sir, coming on top of my weakness, fairly made me cry. For the walls at the top were fringed with palms and jungle trees, and hung with creepers like curtains that trailed over the face of the cliff and down among the ferns by the shore. I leaned over the boat and stared into the water. It was clear, clear—you've no notion how clear; but no bottom could I see. It seemed to sink right through and into the sea on the other side of the world!

"Well, all this was mighty pretty, but it didn't tell me where to find a meal; so I baled out the boat and paddled along the eastern edge of the lake searching the cliffs for a path, and after an hour or so I hit on what looked to me like a foot-track, zig-zagging up through the creepers and across the face of the rock. I determined to try it, made the boat fast to a clump of fern, slung O'Hara's cornet on to my side-belt and began to climb.

"I saw no marks of footsteps; but the track was a path all right, though a teazer. A dozen times I had to crawl on hands and knees under the creepers—creepers with stems as thick as my two wrists—and once, about two-thirds of the way up, I was forced to push sideways through a crevice dripping with water, and so steep under foot that I slid twice and caked myself with mud. I very nearly gave out here; but it was do or die, and after ten minutes more of scratching, pushing, and scrambling, I reached the top and sat down to mop my face and recover.

"I daresay it was another ten minutes before I

fetched breath enough and looked about me; and as I turned my head, there, close behind me, lay another crater with another lake smiling below, all blue and peaceful as the one I had left! I gazed from one to the other. This new crater had no opening on the sea; its sides were steeper, though not quite so tall; and either my eyes played me a trick or its water stood at a higher level. I stood there, comparing the two, when suddenly against the skyline, and not two hundred yards away, I caught sight of a man.

"He was walking towards me around the edge of the crater, and halting every now and then to stare down at my boat. He might be a friend, or he might be a foe; but anyway it was not for me, in my condition, to choose which, so I waited for him to come up. And first I saw that he carried a spear, and wore a pair of wide dirty-white trousers and a short coat embroidered with gold; and next that he was a true Malay, pretty well on in years, with a greyish beard falling over his chest. He had no shirt, but a scarlet sash wrapped about his waist and holding a *kris* and two long pistols handsomely inlaid with gold. In spite of his weapons he seemed a benevolent old boy.

"He pointed towards my boat and tried me with a few questions, first in his own language, then in Spanish, of which I knew very little beyond the sound. But I spread out my hands towards the sea, by way of explaining our voyage, and then pointed to my mouth. If he understood he seemed in no hurry. He tapped O'Hara's cornet gingerly with two fingers. I unstrung it and made shift to

play 'Home, Sweet Home.' This delighted him; he nodded, rubbed his hands, and stepped a few paces from me, then turned and began fingering his spear in a way I did not like at all. 'It's a matter of taste, sir,' said I, or words to that effect, dropping the cornet like a hot potato; but he pointed towards it, and then over a ridge inland, and I gathered I must pick it up and follow him—which I did, and pretty quick.

"From the top of this ridge we faced across a small plain bounded on the north with a tier of hills, most of which seemed by their shape to be volcanoes, and out of action—for the sky lay quite blue and clear above them. The way down into this plain led through jungle; but the plain itself had been cleared of all but small clumps dotted here and there, which gave it, you might say, the look of an English park; and about half-way across, in a clear stretch of lalang grass, stood a village of white huts huddling round a larger and much taller house.

"The old man led me straight towards this, and, coming closer, I saw that the large house had a rough glacis about it and a round wall pierced with loopholes. A number of goats were feeding here and a few small cattle; also the ground about the village had been cleared and planted with fruit-trees,—mangoes, bananas, limes, and oranges,—but as yet I saw no inhabitants. The old Malay, who had kept ahead of me all the way, walking at a fair pace, here halted and once more signed to me to blow on the cornet. I obeyed, of course, this time with 'The British Grenadiers.' I declare to you it was like starting a swarm of bees. You wouldn't believe

the troops that came pouring out of those few huts —the women in loose trousers pretty much like the men's, but with arms bare and loose *sarongs* flung over their right shoulders, the children with no more clothes than a pocket-handkerchief apiece. I can't tell you what first informed me of my guide's rank among them—whether the salaams they offered him, or the richness of his dress—he was the only one with gold lace and the only one who carried pistols —or the air with which he paraded me through the crowd, waving the people back to right and left, and clearing a way to a narrow door in the wall around the great house. A man armed with a long fowling-piece saluted him at the entry; and once inside he pointed from the house to his own breast, as much as to say, 'I am the Chief, and this is mine.' I saluted him humbly.

"A verandah ran around the four sides of the house, with a trench between it and the fortified wall. A plank bridge led across the trench to the verandah steps, where my master—or, to call him by his right name, Hadji Hamid—halted again and clapped his hands. A couple of young Malay women, dressed like those I had passed in the street, ran out in answer, and were ordered to bring me food. While it was preparing I rested on a low chair, blinking at the sunlight on the fortified wall. It had been pierced, on the side of the house, for eleven guns, but six of the embrasures were empty, and of the five pieces standing no two were alike in size, age, or manufacture, and the best seemed to be a nine-pounder, strapped to its carriage with rope. Hadji Hamid saw what I was looking at, and chuckled to

himself solemnly. All through the meal—which began with a mess of rice and chopped fowl and ended with bananas—he sat beside me, chewing betel, touching this thing and that, naming it in his language and making me repeat the words after him. He smiled at every mistake, but never lost his patience; indeed it was clear that my quickness delighted him, and I did my best, wondering all the while what he meant to do with me.

"Well, to be short, sir, he intended to keep me. I believe he would have done it for the sake of the cornet; but before I had finished eating, up stepped a sentry escorting a man with my bombardon under his arm. I had left it, as you know, in the boat, and had heard no order given; but the boat I never saw again, and here was my bombardon. Hadji Hamid took it in both hands, felt it all over, patted it, and ended by turning it over to me and calling in dumb show for a tune. I tell you, my performance was a success. At the first blast he leaned back suddenly in his chair; at the second he turned a kind of purple under his yellow skin; but at the third he caught hold of his stomach and began to roll in his seat and laugh. You never saw a man laugh like it. He made scarcely any sound; he was too near apoplexy to speak; but the tears ran down his face, and one minute his hand would be up waving feebly to me to stop, the next he'd be signalling to go on again. I wanted poor O'Hara; he used to give himself airs and swear at my playing, but among these people he and his cornet would have had to stand down.

"They gave me a bed that night in a corner of

the verandah, and next morning my master came himself to wake me, and took me down to the village bathing-pool, just below the fortifications. It hurt my modesty to find the whole mob of inhabitants gathered there and waiting, and it didn't set me at ease, exactly, to notice that each man carried his spear. For one nasty moment I pictured a duck-hunt, with me playing duck. But there was no cause for alarm. At a signal from Hamid, who stripped and led the way, in we tumbled together—men, women, and children—the men first laying their spears on the bank beside their clothes. Six remained on shore to keep guard, and were relieved after five minutes by another six from the pool. There was a good deal of splashing and horse-play, but nothing you could call immodest, though my fair skin came in for an amount of attention I had to get used to.

"My breakfast was served to me alone, and soon after I was summoned to attend my master in one of the state rooms of the house. I found him on a shaded platform, seated opposite an old native as well-dressed and venerable-looking as himself, but stouter. The pair lolled on cushions at either end of the platform, smoking and smoothing their grey beards. I understood that the visitor was a personage and (somehow) that he had been sent for expressly to hear and be astonished by my performance.

"The two instruments were brought in upon cushions, and I began to play. The visitor—who had less sense of humour than Hamid—did not laugh at all. Instead, he took the mouthpiece of

his *tchibouk* slowly from his lips and held it at a little distance, while his mouth and eyes opened wider and wider. Hamid eyed him keenly, with a kind of triumph under his lids; and the triumph grew as the old man's stare lit up with a jealousy there was no mistaking.

"This, too, passed as I wound up with a flourish and stood at attention, waiting for orders. The visitor put out his hand, but as I offered him the bombardon he waved it aside impatiently and pointed to the cornet. I passed it up to him; he patted and examined it for a while, laid it on his knee, and the two men began talking in low voices.

"I could see that compliments were passing; but you'll guess I wasn't prepared for what followed. Hamid stood up suddenly and whispered to one of his six guards stationed below the platform. The man went out, and returned in five minutes followed by a girl. Now that the island girls were beautiful I had already discovered that morning, and this one was no exception—a small thing about five feet, with glossy black hair and the tiniest feet and hands. She seemed to me to walk nervously, as if brought up for punishment; and a thought took me—and I shall be glad of it when I come to die—that if they meant to ill-use her I might do worse than assault that venerable pair with my bombardon and end my adventures with credit.

"My eyes were so taken up with the girl that for a full minute I paid no attention to my master. She had come to a halt under the platform, a couple of paces from me, with her eyes cast down upon the floor; and he on the platform was speaking.

By and by he stopped, and glancing up I saw that he was motioning me to leave the room. Well, they had made no show as yet of ill-treating her; so I flung her one more look and obeyed, feeling pretty mean. I went out into the verandah, walked the length of it and turned—and there stood the girl right before me! Her little feet had followed me so softly that I had heard nothing; and now, as I stared at her, she crept close with a sort of sidelong motion, and knelt at my feet, at the same moment drawing her *sarong* over her head to hide it. Then the truth came upon me—I was married!

"Aoodya was her name. What else can I tell you about her, to describe her? She was a child, and all life came as play to her, yet she understood love to the tips of her little madder-brown fingers. She was my teacher, too, and I sat at her feet day after day and learned while she drilled the island-language into me; learned by the hour while she untwisted her hair and rubbed it with grated cocoanut, and broke off her toilet to point to this thing and that and tell me its name, laughing at my mistakes or flipping bits of betel at me by way of reward. I had no wife at home to vex my conscience at all. All day we played about Hamid's verandah like two children, and Hamid watched us with a sort of twinkle in his eye, seemingly well content. It was plain he had taken a fancy to me, and I thought, as time passed, he grew friendlier.

"I blessed the old fellow, too. Had he not given me Aoodya? I puzzled my head over this

favour, until Aoodya explained. 'You see,' she said, 'it was done to oblige the Hadji Hassan.' This was the old man who had listened to my performance on the bombardon. He lived in a stockaded house on the far side of the island, the chieftancy of which he and Hamid shared between them and without dispute.

"'How should it oblige Hassan?' I asked.

"'Because Hassan could not see or hear my lord and lover without longing to possess such a man for his very own. As who could?' And here she blew me a kiss.

"'Thank you, jewel of my heart,' said I; 'but yet I don't see. Was it me he wanted, or the bombardon?'

"'I fancy he thought of you together; but of course he did not ask for the big thing—that would have been greedy. He would be content with the little one, the what-you-call cornet; and—don't you see?'

"'No doubt it's stupid of me, my dear,' said I, 'but I'll be shot if I do.'

"She was sitting with a lapful of pandanus leaves, blue and green, weaving a mat of them while we talked, and had just picked out a beater from the tools scattered round her—a flat piece of board with a bevilled edge, and shaped away to a handle. 'Stupid!' she says to me, just like so, and at the same time raps me over the hand smartly. 'He thought—if peradventure there came to us a little one——'

"'*With* a what-you-call cornet?'—I clapped my hand to my mouth over a guffaw; and, with that,

she—who had started laughing too—came to a stop, with her eyes fastened on the back of it. I saw them stiffen, and the pretty round pupils draw in and shrink to narrow slits like a cat's, and her arm went back slowly behind her, and her bosom leaned nearer and nearer. I thought she was going to spring at me, and as my silly laugh died out I turned my hand and held it palm outward, to fend her off. On the back of it was a drop of blood where the bevelled edge of the beater had by accident broken the skin.

"Somehow this movement of mine seemed to fetch her to bearings. Her hand came slowly forward again, hesitated, seemed to hover for a moment at her throat, then went swiftly down to her bosom between bodice and flesh, and came up again tugging after it what looked to me a piece of coarse thread. She tossed it into my lap as I still sat there cross-legged, and with that sprang up and raced away from me, down to the verandah. There was no chance of catching her, and I was (to tell the truth) a bit too much taken aback to try. I picked up the string. On it was threaded a silk purse no bigger than a shilling, and from this I shook into my palm a small stone like an opal. I turned it over once or twice, put it back in the purse, and stowed string, purse, and all in my breeches' pocket.

"I strolled down the verandah to our quarters in search of Aoodya, but the room was empty; and after that I'm afraid I smoked and sulked for the rest of the day, until nightfall. After playing the Hadji Hamid through his meal I went out to

our favourite seat on the edge of the dry ditch, when she came to me out of nowhere across the withered grass of the compound.

"'Have you the charm, O beloved?' she whispered.

"'Oh, it's a charm, is it?' said I, partly sulky yet.

"'Yes, and you must never lose it—never part with it—never, above all, give it back to me. Promise me that, beloved; and I, who have wept much, am happy again.'

"So I promised, and she snuggled close to me, and all was as before. No more was said between us, and by next morning she seemed to have clean forgotten the affair. But I thought of it at times, and it puzzled me.

"Now, as I said, my master had taken a fancy to me quite apart from the bombardon, and a token of it was his constantly taking me out as companion on his walks. You may think it odd that he never troubled about my being an unbeliever—for of course he held by the Prophet, and so did all the islanders, Aoodya included. But in fact, though his people called themselves Mahommedans, each man treated his religion much as he chose, and Hamid talked to me as freely as if I had been his son.

"In this way I learned a deal of the island and its customs, and of the terms by which Hamid and Hassan between them shared its rule. But that any others laid claim to it I had no idea, until one day as we were walking on the coast, and not far from the crater where he had found me first, my master asked suddenly, 'Was I happy?'

"'Quite happy,' I answered.

"'You would not leave us if you could?' he went on, and began to laugh quiet-like, behind his beard. 'Oho! Love, love! I that am old have been merry in my day.' We walked for another mile, maybe, without speaking, and came to the edge of a valley. 'Look down yonder,' said he.

"Below us, and in the mouth of the valley, which grew broad and shallow as it neared the sea, I saw a hill topped by a round wall and compound. There might have been half a dozen houses within the compound, all thatched, and above them stood up a flag painted in red and yellow stripes, and so stiff in the breeze that with half an eye you could tell it was no bunting but a sheet of tin.

"'Hullo!' said I. 'Spaniards?'

"'Puf!' Hamid grinned at the flag and spat. 'A Captain Marquinez inhabits there, with four Manila men and their wives. He is a sensible fellow, and does no harm, and if it pleases him to hoist that toy on a bamboo, he is welcome.'

"'They claim the island, then?'

"'What matters it if they claim? There was a letter once came to us from the Spanish Governor in Tolo. That man was a fool. He gave us warning that by order of the Government at Manila he would send a hundred men to build a fort inland and set up a garrison. Hassan and I took counsel together. "He is a fool," said Hassan; "but we must answer him." So we answered him thus. "Send your men. To-day they come; to-morrow they die—yet trouble not; *we* will bury them."'

"'Were they sent?' I asked.

"'They were not sent. He was a fool, yet within bounds. Nevertheless a time may come for us—not for Hassan and me, we shall die in our beds—but for our sons. Even for this we are prepared.' He would have said more, but checked himself. (I learned later on that the islanders kept one of the craters fortified for emergency, to make a last stand there; but they never allowed me to see the place.) 'We have gods of our own,' said Hamid slily, 'who will be helpful—the more so that we do not bother them over trifles. Also there are—other things; and the lake Sinquan, and another which you have not seen, are full of crocodiles.' He stamped his foot. 'My son, beneath this spot there has been fire, and still the men of Cagayan walk warily and go not without their spears. For you it is different; yet when you come upon aught that puzzles you, it were well to put no questions even to yourself.'

"'Not even about this?' I asked, and showed him the purse and stone which Aoodya had tossed to me.

"'You are in luck's way,' said he, 'whoever gave you that.' He pulled a small pouch from his breast, opened it, and showed me a stone exactly like mine. 'It is a cocoanut pearl. Keep it near to your hand, and forget not to touch it if you hear noises in the air or a man meet you with eyes like razors.'

"I wanted to ask him more, but he started to walk back hastily, and when I caught him up would talk of nothing but the sugar and sweet-potato crops, and the yield of cocoanut oil to be

carried to Kudat at the next north-east monsoon. I noticed that the fruit-trees planted along the shore were old, and that scores of them had ceased bearing. 'They will last my day,' said he. 'Let my sons plant others if they so will.' He always spoke in this careless way of his children, and I believe he had many, for an islander keeps as many wives as he can afford; but they lived about the villages, and could not be told from the other inhabitants by any sign of rank or mark of favour he showed them.

"For a long while I believed that Aoodya must be a daughter of his. She always denied it, but owned that she had never known her mother and had lived in Hamid's house ever since she could remember. Anyhow, he took the greatest care of me, and never allowed me to join the expeditions which sailed twice a year from the island—to Palawan for paddy, and to the north of Borneo with oil and nuts and pandanus mats. He may have mistrusted me; but more likely he forbade it out of care for me and the music I played; for the *prahus* regularly came back with three or four of their number missing—either capsized on the voyage or blown away towards Tawi-Tawi, where the pirates accounted for them.

"Though I might not sail abroad he allowed me to join the tuburing parties off the shore. We would work along the reefs there in rafts of bamboo, towing with us two or three dug-outs filled with mashed *tubur*-roots. At the right spot the dug-outs would be upset, and after a while the fish came floating up on their sides, or belly uppermost, to

be speared by us; for the root puddles the water like milk, and stupefies them somehow without hurting the flesh, which in an hour or so is fit to eat.

"We had been tuburing one afternoon, and put back with our baskets filled to a spit of the shore where we had left an old islander, Kotali by name, alone and tending a fire for our meal. Coming near we saw him stretched on the sand by his cooking-pots, and shouted to wake him, for his fire was low. Kotali did not stir. I was one of the first to jump ashore and run to him. He lay with his legs drawn up, his hands clenched, his eyes wide open and staring at us horribly. The man was as dead as a nail.

"I never saw people worse frightened. 'The Berbalangs!' said someone in a dreadful sort of whisper, and we started to run back to the raft for our lives—I with the rest, for the panic had taken hold of me, though I could see no sign of an enemy. I supposed these Berbalangs, named with such awe, to be pirates or marauders from Tawi-Tawi or some neighbouring island, and the first hint that reached me of anything worse was a wailing sound which grew as we ran, and overhauled us, until the air was filled with roaring, so that I swung round to defend myself, yet could see nothing. To my surprise a man who had been running beside me dropped on the sand, pulled a sigh of relief, and began to mop his face—and this in the very worst of the racket. 'They are gone by,' he shouted; 'the worse the noise the farther off they are. They have taken their fill to-day on poor old Kotali.'

"Suddenly the noise ceased altogether, and we

picked up courage to return and bury the body. We had a basket of limes on the raft, and these were fetched and the juice squeezed over the grave; but no one seemed inclined to answer the questions I put about these Berbalangs. It seemed that unless they were close at hand there was ill-luck even in mentioning them, and I walked back to the village in a good deal of perplexity.

"I should tell you, sir, that by this time I was the father of a fine boy; and that Aoodya doted on him. When she was not feeding him or calling on me to admire his perfections, from the cleverness of his smile to the beautiful shape of his toes, he lay and slept, or kicked in a basket slung on a long bamboo fastened across the rafters. Aoodya would give the basket a pull, and this set it bobbing up and down on the spring of the bamboo for minutes at a time.

"Now when I reached home with my string of fish, I walked round to the back of the house to clean them before going in. This took me past the window of our room, and glancing inside—the window was unglazed, you understand—I saw Aoodya standing before the cradle and talking, quick and angry, with a man posted in the doorway opening on the verandah.

"I was not jealous. The thought never entered my head. But I dropped my fish and whipped round to the doorway in time to catch him as he turned to go, having heard my footstep belike.

"'Who the something-or-other are you?' I asked. 'And what's your business in my private house?'

"The man—a yellow-faced fellow, but young in

figure—muttered something in a gibberish new to me, and made as if excusing himself. It gave me an ugly start to see that his eyes were yellow too, with long slits for pupils; but I saw too that he was afraid of me, and being in a towering rage myself, I out with my *kris*.

"'Now look here,' I said; 'I don't understand what you say, but maybe you understand this. Walk! And if I catch you here again, you'll need someone to sew you up.'

"I watched him as he went across the compound. The guard at the gate scarcely looked up, and if the thing hadn't been impossible, there, in the broad daylight, I could have fancied he saw no one. I turned to Aoodya and took her hands, for she was trembling from head to foot. At my touch she burst out sobbing, clung to my shoulder and begged me to protect her.

"'Why, of course I will,' said I, more cheerfully than I felt by a long sight. 'If I'd known you were frightened like this, I'd have slit his body to match his eyes. But who is he, at all?'

"'He—he said he was my brother!' she wailed, and clung to me again. 'I cannot—I cannot!'

"'I'll brother him!' cried I. 'But what is it he wants?'

"'I cannot—I cannot!' was all she would say; and now her sobs were so loud that the child woke up screaming and had to be soothed. And this seemed to do her good.

"Well, I got her to bed and asleep early that night; but before morning I had a worse fright than ever. Somehow in my dream I had a feeling come

to me that the bed was empty, and sat up suddenly, half awake and scared. Aoodya had risen and was standing by the cradle, with one hand on its edge; in the other was the lamp—a clam-shell fastened in a split handle of bamboo, and holding a pith wick and a little oil. The flame wavered against her eyes as she held it up and peered into the baby's face—and her eyes were like as I had seen them once before, and devilish like the eyes I had seen in another face that afternoon.

"A man never knows what he can do till the call comes. There, betwixt sleep and waking, I knew that happiness had come to an end for us. Yet I slipped out of bed very softly, took the lamp from her as gentle as you please, set it on a stool and, turning, reached out for her two wrists and held them—for how long I can't tell you. She didn't try to fend me away, or struggle at all, and not a word did I utter, but stood holding her—the babe asleep beside us—and listened to her breathing until it grew easier, and she leaned to me, weak as water.

"Then I let go, and lifting the child's head from the pillow pulled Aoodya's charm, the cocoanut pearl, from my neck and hung it about his. 'That's for you, sonny,' said I, 'and if the Berbalangs come along you can pass them on to your father.' I faced round on Aoodya with a smile which no doubt was thin enough, though honestly meant to hearten her. 'It's all right, old girl. Come back to bed,' said I, and held her in my arms until I fell asleep in the dawn.

"But of course it was not all right; and after two days spent with this dismal secret between us, and Aoodya all the while play-acting at her old tricks of

love for me and the babe—as if, God knows, I doubted they, and not the horror, were her real self —I could stand it no longer, but did what I ought to have done before; sought out my master and made a clean breast of it.

"I could see that it took the old man between wind and water. When I had done he sat for some time pulling his beard and eyeing me once or twice rather queerly, as I thought.

"'My friend,' said he at last, 'I suppose you will be suspecting me; yet I give you my word—and the Hadji Hamid is no liar—that if Aoodya is a Berbalang, or a daughter of Berbalangs, the same was unknown to me when I married you.'

"'I'll believe that,' I answered; 'the more by token that I never suspected you.'

"'She had no known father, which (as you know) is held a disgrace among us; so much a disgrace that she grew up without suitors in spite of her looks and my favour. Therefore I seized my chance of giving her a husband, and in that I am not guiltless towards you; but of anything worse I was ignorant, and for proof I am going to help you if I can.' He frowned to himself, still tugging at his beard. 'Her mother was of good family, on this side of the island. Therefore she cannot be pure Berbalang, and most likely the Berbalangs have no more than a fetch upon her'—he used a word new to me, but 'fetch' I took to be the meaning of it. 'If so, we must go to them and persuade them to take it off. They owe me something; for though, as we value peace and quiet, Hassan and I leave them alone in their own dirty village and ask no tax nor homage, we

could make things uncomfortable if we chose. Yes, yes,' said he, 'I think it can be done; but it will be dangerous. You are wearing your cocoanut pearl, of course?'

"I told him that I had given it up to the baby.

"He nodded. 'Yes, that was well done; but you must borrow it for the day. Run and fetch it at once; we have a long walk before us.'

"So I ran back, and without telling Aoodya, who was washing her linen behind the house, slipped the pearl off the child's neck and returned to Hamid. I found him, with two spears in his hand, waiting for me. He gave me one, and forth we set.

"The Berbalangs' village stands on a sort of table-land in the hills which rise all the way to Mount Tebulian, near the centre of the island. After the first two miles I found myself in strange country, and Hamid kept silence and signed to me to do the same. In this way we sweated up the slopes until, a little after noon, we reached a pass, and saw the roofs of the village over the edge of a broad step, as it were, half a mile above us. Here we sat down, and Hamid, drawing a couple of limes from his pocket, explained that I must on no account taste any food the Berbalangs set before us unless I first sprinkled it with lime juice. It might look like curried fish, but would, as likely as not, be human flesh disguised, the taste of which would destroy my soul and convert me into a Berbalang; a touch of the lime juice would turn such food back to its proper shape and show me what I was being asked to eat.

"We now moved forward again, very cautiously, and soon came to the village. The houses, perhaps

a dozen in all, were scandalously dirty, otherwise pretty much like those in Hamid's own village. But not a living creature could be seen. Hamid, I could tell, was puzzled, and even a bit frightened. He put a good face on it, all the same, and began to walk from house to house, keeping his spear handy as he peered in at the doors. Still not a soul could we find, barring an old goat tethered and a few roaming fowls. The stink of the place sickened us, and I wanted to run, though we came across no actual horrors. In one room we found a pan of rice lately boiled and still smoking, and sprinkled it with lime juice. It remained good rice. Out into the street we went, and Hamid, growing bolder, raised a loud halloo. The noise of it sent the fowls scudding, and the hills around took it up and echoed it.

"He looked at me. 'They must be out on the hunt,' said he.

"'Good Lord!' I gasped. 'And the child at home —without the pearl!' I turned and plunged for it down the slope like a madman.

"What to do I had no idea; but I hadn't a doubt that the Berbalangs were after Aoodya or the child, or both, and I headed for home with the wind singing by my ears. At the foot of the pass I looked back. Hamid was following, skipping from one lava stone to another at a pace that did credit to his old legs. He waved a hand and called—as I thought, to encourage me; and away down I pounded.

"I must have reached the edge of the plain in twenty minutes (the climb had taken us more than two hours), and, once there, I squeezed my elbows into my sides and settled into stride. Luckily the

season was dry, and a fire, three weeks before, had swept over the tall lalang grass, leaving a thin layer of ash, which made running easy. For all that, I was pretty near dead beat when I reached the compound and ran past the sentry. The man cried out at sight of me as I went by; but I thought he was just pattering out his challenge, being taken unawares; and knowing he would not let off his musket if he recognised me, I paid no attention.

"I had prepared myself (as I thought) for anything —to find Aoodya dead beside the child, or to find them both unharmed and flourishing as I had left them. But what happened was that I burst in and stared around an empty room. *That* knocked the wind out of my sails. I called twice, leaned my head against the door-post and panted; called again, and, getting no answer, walked stupidly back across the compound to the gate.

"The sentry there was pointing. I believe he was telling me, too, that Aooyda, with the child in her arms, had passed out some while before. But as he waved a hand towards the plain I saw a figure running there, and recognised Hamid. The old man was heading, not towards us, but for the seashore, and, plain as daylight, he was heading there with a purpose. I remembered now his cry to me from the head of the pass. So I pressed elbows to side again and lit out after him.

"He was making for a thick patch of jungle between us and the sea, and though I had run at least a mile out of the way I soon began to overhaul him. But long before I reached the clump he

had found an opening in it and dived out of sight, and I overtook him only when the growth thinned suddenly by the edge of a crater, plunging down to a lake so exactly like Sinquan that I had to look about me and take my bearings before making sure that this was another, and one I had never yet seen.

"I caught him by the arm, and we peered down the slope together. At the foot of it, and by the edge of the lake, there ran a strip of white beach; and there, and almost directly below us, were gathered the Berbalangs.

"They were moving and pushing into place in a sort of circle around a small bundle which at first sight I took for a heap of clothes. At that distance they seemed harmless enough, and, barring the strangeness of the spot, might have been an ordinary party of islanders forming up for a dance. But when, all of a sudden, the ring came to a standstill, and a figure stepped out of it towards the bundle in the centre, my wits came back to me, and I flung up both arms, shouting 'Aoodya! Aoodya!'

"She must have made three paces in the time my voice took to reach her. She was close to the child. Then she halted and stood for a moment gazing up at me. I saw something bright drop from her. And with that she stooped, caught up the child, and was racing up the slope towards us.

"'Steady!' muttered Hamid, as a man broke from the circle, plucked up the knife from the sand and rushed after her. 'Steady!' he said again.

"Aoodya had a start of twenty yards or more, and in the first half-minute she actually managed to

better it. Hamid, beside me, rubbed a bullet quickly on the rind of one of his lime-fruits and rammed it home. He took an eternal time about it; and below, now, the man was gaining. Unluckily their courses brought them into line, and twice the old man cursed softly and lowered his piece.

"Flesh and blood could not stand this. I let out a groan and sprang down the cliff. It was madness, and at the third step all foothold slipped from under me; but my clutch was tight on a fistful of creepers, and their tendrils were tough as a ship's rope. So down I went, now touching earth, now fending off from the rock with my feet, now missing hold and sprawling into a mass of leaves and roots, among which I clutched wildly and checked myself by the first thing handy—until, with the crack of Hamid's musket above, the vine, or whatever it was to which I clung for the moment, gave way as if shorn by the bullet, and I pitched a full twenty feet with a rush of loose earth and dust.

"I fell almost at the heels of Aoodya's enemy, upon a ledge along which he was swiftly running her down. Hamid's bullet had missed him, and before I could make the third in the chase he was forty yards ahead. I saw his bare shoulders parting the creepers—threading their way in and out like a bobbin, and jogging as the pace fell slower; for now we were all three in difficulties. Perhaps Aoodya had missed the track; at anyrate the ledge we were now following grew shallower as it curved over the corner of the beach and ran sheer over the water of the lake. A jungle tree leaned out here, with a clear drop of a hundred feet. As I closed on my man,

he swerved and began to clamber out along the trunk; and over his shoulder I saw Aoodya, with the babe in the crick of her arm, upon a bough which swayed and sank beneath her.

"I clutched at his ankle. He reached back with a hiss of his breath and jabbed his knife down on my left hand, cutting across the two middle fingers and pinning me through the small bones to the trunk. I tell you, sir, I scarcely felt it. My right went down to my waist and pulled out the *kris* there. He was the man I had caught within the verandah three days before; these were the same eyes shining, like a cat's, back into mine, and what I had promised him then I gave him now. But it was Hamid who killed him. For as my *kris* went into the flank of him, above the hip, Hamid's second shot cut down through his neck. His face at the moment rested sideways against the branch, and I suppose the bullet passed through to the bough and cost me Aoodya. For as the Berbalang fell, the bough seemed to rip away from where his cheek had rested, and Aoodya, with my child in her arms, swung back under my feet and dropped like a stone into the lake.

"I can't tell you, sir, how long I lay stretched out along that trunk, with the Berbalang's knife still pinned through my hand. I was staring down into the water. Aoodya and my child never rose again; but the Berbalang came to the surface at once and floated, bobbing for a while on the ripple, his head thrown back, his brown chest shining up at me, and the blood spreading on the water around it.

"It was Hamid who unpinned me and led me

away. He had made shift to climb down, and while binding up my wounded hand pointed towards the beach. It was empty. The crowd of Berbalangs had disappeared.

"He found the track which Aoodya had missed, and as he led me up and out of the crater I heard him talking—talking. I suppose he was trying to comfort me—he was a good fellow; but at the top I turned on him, and 'Master,' I said, 'you have tried to do me much kindness, but to-day I have bought my quittance.' With that I left him standing and walked straight over the brow of the hill. I never looked behind me until I reached the Spaniards' compound, and called out at the gate to be let pass.

"Captain Marquinez was lying in a hammock in the cool of his verandah when the gate-keeper took me to him. He was, I think, the weariest man I ever happened on. 'So you want to leave the island?' said he when my tale was out. 'Yes, yes, I believe you; I've learnt to believe anything of those devils up yonder. But you must wait a fortnight, till the relief-boat arrives from Jola'——"

Here the story-teller broke off as a rider upon a grey horse came at a foot-pace round the slope of Burrator below us and passed on without seeing. It was the Rajah, returning solitary from the hunt, and his eyes were still fastened ahead of him.

"Ah, great man! England is a weary hole for the likes of you and me. It's here they talk of the East, but we have loved it and hated it and known

it, and remember. Our eyes have seen—our eyes have seen."

He stood up, pulled himself together with a kind of shiver, and suddenly shambled away across the slope, having said no good-bye, but leaving me there at gaze.

VICTOR

I

"YOU will ruin his life," said one of the two women. As the phrase escaped her she remembered, or seemed to remember, having met with it in half a dozen novels. She had nerved herself for the interview which up to this moment had been desperately real; but now she felt herself losing grip. It had all happened before . . . somewhere; she was re-acting an old scene, going through a part; the four or five second-hand words gave her this sensation. Then she reflected that the other woman, too, had perhaps met them before in some cheap novelette, and, being an uneducated person, would probably find them the more impressive for that.

The other woman had in fact met them before, in the pages of *Bow Bells*, and been impressed by them. But since then love had found her ignorant and left her wise; wiser than in her humiliation she dared to guess, and yet the wiser for being humiliated. She answered in a curiously dispassionate voice: "I think, miss, his life is ruined already; that is, if he sent you to say all this to me."

"He did not." Miss Bracy lifted the nose and chin

which she inherited from several highly distinguished Crusaders, and gave the denial sharply and promptly, looking her ex-maid straight in the face. She had never—to use her own words—stood any nonsense from Bassett.

But Bassett, formerly so docile (though, as it now turned out, so deceitful); who had always known her place and never answered her mistress but with respect; was to-day an unrecognisable Bassett—not in the least impudent, but as certainly not to be awed or brow-beaten. Standing in the glare of discovered misconduct, under the scourge of her shame, the poor girl had grasped some secret strength which made her invincible.

"But I think, miss," she answered, "Mr. Frank must have known you was coming." And this Miss Bracy could not deny. She had never told a lie in her life.

"It is very likely—no, it is certain—that he guessed," she admitted.

"And if so, it comes to the same thing," Bassett persisted, with a shade of weariness in her voice.

"You ungrateful girl! You ungrateful and quite extraordinary girl! First you inveigle that poor boy at the very outset of his career, and then when upon a supposed point of honour he offers to marry you——"

"A 'supposed' point, miss? Do you say 'supposed'?"

"Not one in a thousand would offer such a redemption. And even he cannot know what it will mean to his life—what it will cost him."

"I shall tell him, miss," said Bassett quietly.

"And his parents—what do you suppose they would say, were they alive? His poor mother, for instance?"

Bassett dismissed this point silently. To Miss Bracy the queerest thing about the girl was the quiet practical manner she had put on so suddenly.

"You said, miss, that Mr. Frank wants to make amends on a 'supposed' point of honour. Don't you think it a real one?"

Miss Bracy's somewhat high cheekbones showed two red spots. "Because he offers it, it doesn't follow that you ought to accept. And that's the whole point," she wound up viciously.

Bassett sighed that she could not get her question answered. "You will excuse me, miss, but I never 'inveigled' him, as you say. That I deny; and if you ask Mr. Frank he will bear me out. Not that it's any use trying to make you believe," she added, with a drop back to her old level tone as she saw the other's eyebrows go up. It was indeed hopeless, Miss Bracy being one of those women who take it for granted that a man has been inveigled as soon as his love-affairs run counter to their own wishes or taste; and who thereby reveal an estimate of man for which in the end they are pretty sure to pay heavily. All her answer now was a frankly incredulous stare.

"You won't believe me, miss. It's not your fault, I know; you *can't* believe me. But I loved Mr. Frank."

Miss Bracy made a funny little sound high up in her Crusader nose. That the passions of gentlemen were often ill-regulated she knew; it disgusted her,

but she recognised it as a real danger to be watched by their anxious relatives. That *love*, however—what she understood by *love*—could be felt by the lower orders, the people who "walked together" and "kept company" before mating, was too incredible. Even if driven by evidence to admit the fact she would have set it down to the pernicious encroachment of Board School education, and remarked that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

"'Love!' My poor child, don't profane a word you cannot possibly understand. A nice love, indeed, that shows itself by ruining his life!"

That second-hand phrase again! As it slipped out, the indomitable Bassett dealt it another blow.

"I am not sure, miss, that I love him any longer—in the same way, I mean. I should always have a regard for him—for many reasons—and because he behaved honourably in a way. But I couldn't quite believe in him as I did before he showed himself weak."

"Well, of all the——" Miss Bracy's lips were open for a word to fit this offence, when Bassett followed it up with a worse one.

"I beg your pardon, miss, but you are so fond of Mr. Frank—Supposing I refused his offer, would you marry him yourself?"

The girl, too, meant it quite seriously. In her tone was no trace of impudence. She had divined her adversary's secret, and thrust home the question with a kind of anxious honesty. Miss Bracy, red and gasping, tingling with shame, yet knew that she was not being exulted over. She dropped the unequal fight between conventional argument and

naked insight, and stood up, woman to woman. She neither denied nor exclaimed. She too told the truth.

"Never!"—she paused. "After what has happened I would never marry my cousin."

"I thought that, miss. You mean it, I am sure; and it eases my mind; because you have been a good mistress to me, and it would always have been a sorry thought that I'd stood in your way. Not that it would have prevented me."

"Do you still stand there and tell me that you will hold this unhappy boy to his word?"

"He's twenty-two, miss; my own age. Yes, I shall hold him to it."

"To save yourself!"

"No, miss."

"For his own sake, then?" Miss Bracy's laugh was passing bitter.

"No, miss—though there might be something in that."

"For whose then?"

The girl did not answer. But in the silence her mistress understood, and moved to the door. She was beaten, and she knew it; beaten and unforgiving. In the doorway she turned.

"It is not for your own sake that you persist? It was not to gratify yourself—to be made a lady—that you plotted this? Very well; you shall be taken at your word. I cannot counsel Frank against his honour; if he insists, and you still accept the sacrifice, he shall marry you. But from that hour—you understand?—you have seen the last of him. I know Frank well enough to promise it."

She paused to let the words sink in and watch their effect. This was not only cruel, but a mistake; for it gave Bassett—who was past caring for it—the last word.

"If you do, miss," she said drearily, yet with a mind made up, "I daresay that will be best."

II

Long before I heard this story I knew three of the characters in it. Just within the harbour beside which I am writing this—on your left as you enter it from the sea—a little creek runs up past Battery Point to a stout sea-wall with a turfed garden behind it and a low cottage, and behind these a steep-sided valley, down which a stream tumbles to a granite conduit. It chokes and overflows the conduit, is caught again into a granite-covered gutter by the door of the cottage, and emerges beyond it in a small cascade upon the beach. At spring tides the sea climbs to the foot of this cascade, and great then is the splashing. The land-birds, tits and warblers, come down to the very edge to drink; but none of them—unless it be the wagtail—will trespass on the beach below. The rooks and gulls, on their side, never forage above the cascade, but when the ploughing calls them inland, mount and cross the frontier-line high overhead. All day long in summer the windows of the cottage stand open, and its rooms are filled with song; and night and day, summer and winter, the inmates move and talk, wake and sleep, to the contending music of the waters.

It had lain tenantless for two years, when one spring morning Miss Bracy and Mr. Frank Bracy arrived and took possession. They came (for aught we knew) out of nowhere; but they brought a good many boxes, six cats, and a complete set of new muslin blinds. On their way they purchased a quart of fresh milk, and Mr. Frank fed the cats while Miss Bracy put up the blinds. In the afternoon a long van arrived with a load of furniture; and we children who had gathered to watch were rewarded by a sensation when the van started by disgorging an artist's lay-figure, followed by a suit of armour. From these to a mahogany chest of drawers with brass handles was a sad drop, and we never regained the high romance of those first few minutes; but the furniture was undeniably handsome, and when Miss Bracy stepped out and offered us sixpence apiece to go and annoy somebody else, we came away convinced that our visitors were persons of exceptionally high rank. It puzzled us afterwards that, though a bargain is a bargain, not one of us had stayed to claim his sixpence.

The newcomers brought no servants; but after a week there arrived (also out of nowhere) an elderly and taciturn cook. Also, Miss Bracy on the third morning walked up to the farm at the head of the valley and hired down the hind's second daughter for a "help." We knew this girl, Lizzie Truscott, and waylaid her on her homeward road that evening for information. She told us that Miss Bracy's cats had a cradle apiece lined with muslin over pink calico; that the window curtains inside reached from the ceilings to the floors; that the number of

knives and forks was something cruel—one kind for fish, another for meat, and a third for fruit; that in one of the looking-glasses a body could see herself at one time from head to feet, though why you should want a looking-glass to see your feet in when you could see them without was more than she knew; and, finally, that Miss Bracy had strictly forbidden her to carry tales—a behest which, convinced that Miss Bracy had dealings with the Evil One, she meant to observe. The elderly cook when she arrived warned us away from the door with a dialect we did not recognise. Her name (Lizzie reported) was Deborah, and in our haste we set her down for a Jewess; but I seem to have detected her accent since, and a few of her pet phrases, in the pages of Scottish fiction.

This is all I can tell — so fitful are childish memories—of the coming of Miss Bracy and Mr. Frank. I cannot say, for instance, what gossip it bred, or how soon they wore down the edge of it and became, with their eccentricities, an accepted feature of the spot they had made their home. They made no friends, no acquaintances: everyone knew of Miss Bracy's cats, but few had seen them. Miss Bracy herself was on view in church every Sunday morning, when Mr. Frank walked with her as far as the porch. He never entered the building, but took a country walk during service, returning in time to meet her at the porch and escort her home. His other walks he took alone, and almost always at night. The policeman tramping towards Four Turnings after midnight to report to the country patrol would meet him and pause for a minute's

chat. Night-wandering beasts—foxes and owls and hedgehogs—knew his footstep and unlearned their first fear of it. Sometimes, but not often, you might surprise him of an afternoon seated before an easel in some out-of-the-way corner of the cliffs; but if you paused then to look, he too paused and seemed inclined to smudge out his work. The Vicar put it about that Mr. Frank had formerly been a painter of fame, and (being an astute man) one day decoyed him into his library, where hung an engraving of a picture "Amos Barton" by one F. Bracy. It had made a small sensation at Burlington House a dozen years before; and the Vicar liked it for the pathos of its subject — an elderly clergyman beside his wife's deathbed. To him the picture itself could have told little more than this engraving, which utterly failed to suggest the wonderful colour and careful work the artist (a young man with a theory and enthusiasm to back it) had lavished on the worn carpet and valances of the bed, as well as on the chestnut hair of the dying woman glorified in the red light of sunset.

Mr. Frank glanced up at the engraving and turned his face away. It was the face of a man taken at unawares, embarrassed, almost afraid. The Vicar, who had been watching him, intending some pleasant remark about the picture, saw at once that something was wrong, and with great tact kept the talk upon some petty act of charity in which he sought to enlist his visitor's help. Mr. Frank listened, gave his promise hurriedly and made his escape. He never entered the Vicarage again.

III

Eighteen years had passed since Miss Bracy's interview with Bassett; and now, late on a summer afternoon, she and Mr. Frank were pacing the little waterside garden while they awaited their first visitor.

Mr. Frank betrayed the greater emotion, or at any rate the greater nervousness. Since breakfast he had been unable to sit still or to apply himself to any piece of work for ten minutes together, until Miss Bracy suggested the lawn-mower and brought purgatory upon herself. With that lawn-mower all the afternoon he had been "rattling her brain to fiddle-strings"—as she put it—and working himself into a heat which obliged a change of clothes before tea. The tea stood ready now on a table which Deborah had carried out into the garden—dainty linen and silverware, and flowered china dishes heaped with cakes of which only Scotswomen know the secrets. The sun, dropping behind Battery Point, slanted its rays down through the pine-trunks and over the fiery massed plumes of rhododendrons. Scents of jasmine and of shorn grass mingled with the clean breath of the sea borne to the garden wall on a high tide tranquil and clear—so clear that the eye following for a hundred yards the lines of the cove could see the feet of the cliffs where they rested, three fathoms down, on lily-white sand. Miss Bracy adored these clean depths. She had missed much that life could have given; but at least she had found a life comely and to her mind. She had sacrificed much; but at times she forgot how

much in contemplating the modest elegance of the altar.

She wore, this evening, a gown of purplish silk, with a light cashmere scarf about her shoulders. Nothing could make her a tall woman; but her grey hair, dressed high *à l'impératrice*, gave her dignity at least, and an air of old-fashioned distinction. And she was one of those few and fortunate ladies who never need to worry about the appearance of their cavaliers. Mr. Frank—six feet of him, without reckoning a slight stoop—always satisfied the eye; his grey flannel suit fitted loosely but fitted well; his wide-brimmed straw hat was as faultless as his linen; his necktie had a negligent neatness; you felt sure alike and at once of his bootmaker and his shirtmaker; and his fresh complexion, his prematurely white hair, his strong well-kept hands, completed the impression of cleanliness for its own sake, of a careful physical cult as far as possible removed from foppery.

This may have been in Miss Bracy's mind when she began: "I daresay he will be fairly presentable, to look at. That unfortunate woman had at least an art of dressing—a quiet taste too, quite extraordinary in one of her station. I often wondered where she picked it up."

Mr. Frank winced. Until the news of his wife's death came, a fortnight ago, her name had not been spoken between them for years. That he and his cousin regarded her very differently he knew; but while silence was kept it had been possible to ignore the difference. Now it surprised him that speech should hurt so; and, at the same moment,

that his cousin should not divine how sorely it hurt. After all *he* was the saddest evidence of poor Bassett's "lady-like" tastes.

"I suppose you know nothing of the school she sent him to?" Miss Bracy went on — "King William's, or whatever it is."

"King Edward's," Mr. Frank corrected. "Yes, I made inquiries about it at the time—ten years ago. People speak well of it. Not a public school, of course—at least, not quite; the line isn't so easy to draw nowadays—but it turns out gentlemen."

In her heart Miss Bracy thought him too hopeful; but she said, "He wrote a becoming letter — his hand, by the way, curiously suggests yours; it was quite a nice letter, and agreeably surprised me. I shouldn't wonder if his headmaster had helped him with it and cut out the boyish heroics; for of course *she* must have taught him to hate us."

"My dear Laura, why in the world——" began Mr. Frank testily.

"Oh, she had spirit!"—the encounter of long ago rose up in Miss Bracy's memory, and she nodded her head with conviction. "Like most of the quiet ones, she had spirit. You don't suppose, I imagine, that she forgave?"

"No." Mr. Frank came to a halt and dug with his heel at a daisy root in the turf. Then using his heel as a pivot he swung himself round in an awkward circle. The action was ludicrous almost, but he faced his cousin again with serious eyes. "But it is not her heart that I doubt," he added gently.

Miss Bracy stared up at him. "My dear Frank, do you mean to tell me that you *regret*?"

Yes; as a fact he did regret, and knew that he would never cease to regret. He was not a man to nurse malice even for a wrong done to him, still less to live carelessly conscious of having wronged another. He was weak, but incurably just. And more; though self entered last into his regret, he knew perfectly well that the wrong had wrecked him too. His was a career *manqué*: he had failed as a man, and it had broken his nerve as an artist. He was a dabbler now, with—as Heine said of de Musset—a fine future *behind him*, and none but an artist can tell the bitterness of that self-knowledge. Had he kept his faith with Bassett in spirit as in letter, he might have failed just as decidedly; her daily companionship might have coarsened his inspiration, soured him, driven him to work cheaply, recklessly; but at least he could have accused fate, circumstance, a boyish error, whereas now he and his own manhood shared the defeat and the responsibility. Yes, he regretted; but it would never do to let Laura know his regret. That would be to play the double traitor. She had saved him (she believed) from himself; with utterly wrong-headed loyalty she had devoted her life to this. The other debt was irredeemable, but this at any rate could be paid.

He evaded her question. "My dear," he said, "what was done has been atoned for by her, and is being atoned for by—by us. Let us think of her without bitterness."

Miss Bracy shook her head "I am a poor sort

of Christian," she confessed; "and if she has taught this boy to hate us——"

"Mr. Victor Bracy," announced Deborah from the garden-porch behind them, and a tall youth in black stepped past her and came across the turf with a shy smile.

The pair turned with an odd sense of confusion, almost of dismay. They were prepared for the "Victor," but somehow they had not thought of him as bearing their own surname. Mr. Frank had felt the shock once before, in addressing an envelope; but to Miss Bracy it was quite new.

Yet she was the first to recover herself, and, while holding out her hand, took quick note that the boy had Frank's stature and eyes, carried his clothes well, and himself, if shyly, without clumsiness. She could find no fault with his manner of shaking hands; and when he turned to his father, the boy's greeting was the less embarrassed of the two. Mr. Frank indeed had suddenly become conscious of his light suit and bird's-eye neckcloth.

"But how did you come?" asked Miss Bracy. "We sent a cart to meet you—I heard no sound of wheels."

"Yes, I saw it outside the station; but the man didn't recognise me — quite a small crowd came by the train—and of course I didn't recognise him. So I bribed a porter to put my luggage on a barrow and come along with me. Half-way up the hill the cart overtook us—the driver full of apologies. While they transhipped my things I walked on ahead—yes, listen, there it comes; and —Oh, I say, what a lovely spot!"

Miss Bracy was listening—not for the wheels and not to the story, but critically to every word as it came from his lips. "The woman has certainly done wonders," was her unspoken comment. At Victor's frank outburst, however, she flushed with something like real pleasure. She was proud of her cottage and garden, and had even a sort of proprietary feeling about the view.

They sat down around the little tea-table; the boy first apologising for his travel-stains (he was, in fact, as neat as a pin) and afterwards chatting gaily about his journey—not talking too much, but appealing from one to another with a quick deferent grace, and allowing them always the lead. "This is better and better," thought Miss Bracy as she poured tea; and, after a while, "But this is amazing!" He was a thorough child, too, with all his unconscious tact. The scent of a lemon-verbena plant fetched him suddenly to his feet with his eyes bright. "Please let me——" he thrust his face into the bush; "I have never seen it growing like this."

Miss Bracy looked at Mr. Frank. How utterly different it was from their old-maidish expectations! They had pictured the scene a hundred times, and always it included some awkwardly decorous reference to the dead woman. *This* had been their terror—to do justice to the occasion without hurting the poor boy's feelings—to meet his sullen shyness, perhaps antipathy, with a welcome which somehow excused the past. Yes, the past (they had felt) required excuse to *him*. And he had made no allusion to his mother, and obviously wished for

none. Miss Bracy could not help smiling at the picture of their fears.

The boy turned, caught her smiling, and broke into a jolly laugh at his own absurdity. It echoed in the garden, where no one had laughed aloud for years.

And with that laugh Bassett's revenge began.

IV

For with that laugh they began to love him. They did not—or at any rate Miss Bracy did not—know it at the time. For some days they watched him; and he, the unsuspicious one, administered a score of shocks as again and again he took them neatly and decisively at unawares. He had accepted them at once and in entire good faith. They were (with just the right recognition of their seniority) good comrades in this jolliest of worlds. They were his holiday hosts, and it was not for the guest to hint (just yet) at the end of the holiday.

He surprised them at every turn. His father's canvases filled him with admiring awe. "Oh, but I say—however is it done?" As he stood before them with legs a trifle wide, he smoothed the top of his head with a gesture of perplexity. And Mr. Frank, standing at his shoulder with legs similarly spread, used the same gesture—as Miss Bracy had seen him use it a thousand times. Yet the boy had no artistic talent — not so much as a germ. For beauty of line and beauty of colour he inherited

an impeccable eye; indeed his young senses were alive to seize all innocent delight,—his quickness in scenting the lemon-verbena bush proved but the first of many instances. But he began and ended with enjoyment; of the artist's impulse to reproduce and imitate beauty he felt nothing. Mr. Frank recognised with a pang that he had failed not only in keeping his torch bright but in passing it on; that the true self which he had missed expressing must die with him barren and untransmitted. The closer he drew in affection, the farther this son of his receded,—receded in the very act of acknowledging his sonship—with a gesture, smilingly imprehensible; with eyes which allured the yearning he baffled, and tied it to the hopeless chase.

Mr. Frank, who worshipped flowers, was perhaps the most ineffective gardener in England. With a trowel and the best intentions he would do more damage in twenty minutes than Miss Bracy could repair in a week. She had made a paradise in spite of him, and he contented himself with assuring her that the next tenant would dig it up and find it paved with good intentions. The seeds he sowed—and he must have sown many pounds' worth before she stopped the wild expense — never sprouted by any chance. "Dormant, my dear Laura — dormant!" he would exclaim in springtime, rubbing his head perplexedly as he studied the empty borders. "When I die, and am buried here, they will all sprout together, and you will have to take a hook and cut your way daily through the vegetation which hides my grave." But Victor, who approached them in the frankest ignorance, seemed

to divine the ways of flowers at once. In the autumn he struck cuttings of Miss Bracy's rarest roses; he removed a sickly passion-flower from one corner of the cottage to another and restored it to health within a fortnight. Within a week after his coming he and Miss Bracy were deep in cross-fertilizing a borderful of carnations she had raised from seed. He carried the same natural deftness into a score of small household repairs. He devised new cradles for Miss Bracy's cats, and those conservative animals at once accepted the improvement; he invented a cupboard for his father's canvases; he laid an electric bell from the kitchen beneath the floor of the dining-room, so that Miss Bracy could ring for Deborah by a mere pressure of the foot; and the well-rope which Deborah had been used to wind up painfully was soon fitted with a wheel and balance-weight which saved four-fifths of the labour.

"It beats me where you learned how to do these things," his father protested.

"But it doesn't want learning; it's all so simple—not like painting, you know."

Mr. Frank had been corresponding with the boy's headmaster. "Yes, he is a good fellow," said one of the letters; "just a gentle clear-minded boy, with courage at call when he wants it, and one really remarkable talent. You may not have discovered it, but he is a mathematician; and as different from the ordinary book-made mathematician—from the dozens of boys I send up regularly to Cambridge—as cheese is from chalk. He has a sort of passion for pure reasoning—for its processes. Of course he

does not know it; but from the first it has been a pleasure to me (an old pupil of Routh's) to watch his work. 'Style' is not a word one associates as a rule with mathematics, but I can use no other to express the quality which your boy brings to that study. . . ."

"Good Lord!" groaned Mr. Frank, who had never been able to add up his washing bills.

He read the letter to Miss Bracy, and the pair began to watch Victor with a new wonder. They were confident that no Bracy had ever been a mathematician; for an uncle of theirs, now a rector in Shropshire and once of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where for reasons best known to himself he had sought honours in the Mathematical Tripos and narrowly missed the Wooden Spoon, had clearly no claim to the title. Whence in the world did the boy derive this gift? "His mother——" Miss Bracy began, and broke off as a puff of smoke shot out from the fireplace. It was late September; Deborah had lit the fire that morning for the first time since May, and the chimney never drew well at starting. Miss Bracy took the tongs in hand, but she was not thinking of the smoke; neither was Mr. Frank, while he watched her. They were both thinking of the dead woman. The thought of her —the ghost of her—was always rising now between them and her boy; *she* was the impalpable screen they tried daily and in vain to pierce; to *her* they had come to refer unconsciously all that was inexplicable in him. And so much was inexplicable! They loved him now; they stretched out their hands to him: behind *her* he smiled at them,

but through or across *her* their hands could never reach.

As at first they had avoided all allusion to her, and been thankful that the boy's reticence made it easy, so now they grew almost feverishly anxious to discover how he felt towards his mother's memory. They detected each other laying small traps for him, and were ashamed. They held their breath as with an air of cheerful unconsciousness he walked past the traps, escaping them one and all. At first in her irritation Miss Bracy accused him of what she (of all women !) called false pride. "He is ashamed of her. He wishes to forget, and is only too glad that we began by encouraging him." On second thoughts she knew the charge to be undeserved and odious. His obvious simplicity gave it the lie. Moreover she knew that a small water-colour sketch of her in her youth—a drawing of Mr. Frank's—stood on the table in the boy's bedroom. Miss Bracy often dusted that room with her own hands.

"And, Frank," she confessed one day, "he kisses it! I know by the dullness on the glass when I rub it." She did not add that she rubbed it viciously. "I tell you," she insisted, almost with a groan, "he lives with her. She is with him in this house in spite of us; she talks with him; his real existence is with her. He comes out of it to make himself pleasant to us, but he goes back and tells her his secrets."

"Nonsense, Laura," Mr. Frank interrupted testily. "For some reason or other the boy is getting on your nerves. It is natural, after all."

"Natural? Yes, I see: you mean that I'm an old maid, and it's a case of crabbed age and youth."

"My dear Laura, I mean nothing so rude. But, after all, we have been living here a great many years and it *is* a change."

"Frank, you can be singularly dense at times. Must I tell you in so many words that I am fond of the boy, and if he'd be only as fond of me he might racket the house down and I'd only like him the better for it?"

Mr. Frank rubbed his head, and then with sudden resolution marched out of the house in search of Victor. He found the boy on the roof removing a patent cowl which the local mason had set up a week before to cure the smoky chimney.

"My dear fellow," the father cried up, "you'll break your neck! Come down at once—I have something particular to say to you."

Victor descended with the cowl under his arm.

"Do be careful. . . . Doesn't it make you giddy, clambering about in places like that?" Mr. Frank had no head at all for a height.

"Not a bit. . . . Just look at this silly contrivance —choked with soot in three days! The fellow who invented it ought to have his head examined."

"It has made you in a horrible mess," said his father, who took no interest in cowls, but lost his temper in a smoky house.

"I'll run in and have a change and wash."

"No; put the nasty thing down and come into the garden." He opened the gate, and Victor followed, after dipping his hands in the waterfall.

"The fact is, my boy, I've come to a decision. This has been a pleasant time—a very pleasant time—for all of us. We have put off speaking to

you about this, but I hope you understand that this is to be your home henceforward; that we wish it and shall be the happier for having you . . ."

Victor had been gazing out over the cove, but now turned and met his father's eyes frankly. "I have a little money," he said. "Mother managed to put by a small sum from time to time, enough to start me in life. She did not tell me until a few days before she died: she knew I wanted to be an engineer."

He said this quite simply. It was the first time he had mentioned his mother. Mr. Frank felt his face flushing.

"But your headmaster tells me it will be a thousand pities if you don't go to Cambridge. I am proposing that you should go there—should matriculate this term. My dear boy"—he laid a hand on Victor's arm—"don't refuse me this. I have no right—perhaps—to insist; but I daresay you can guess what your acceptance would mean to me. You can choose your own career when the time comes. For your sake your mother would have liked this: ask yourself if she would not."

Mr. Frank had not looked forward to pleading like this; yet when it came to the point this seemed his only possible attitude. Victor had removed his gaze, and his eyes were resting now on the green sunny waves rolling in at the harbour's mouth. For almost a minute he kept silence; then—

"Yes, she would advise it," he said. It was as though he had laid the case before an unseen counsellor and waited submissively for the answer. Mr. Frank had gained his end and without trouble: yet

he felt a disappointment he could not at once explain. He was the last man in the world to expect a gratitude which he did not deserve; but in the satisfaction of carrying his point he missed something, and surmised what he missed. The boy had not turned to *him* for the answer, but had turned away and brought it to him. Father and son would never have the deeper joy of taking counsel together heart to heart.

V

So Victor went up to Trinity, and returned for the Christmas vacation on the heels of an announcement that he had won a scholarship. He had grown more manly and serious, and he smoked a tobacco which sorely tried Miss Bracy's distinguished nose; but he kept the boyish laugh—the laugh which always seemed to them to call invitingly from the door of his soul, "Why don't you enter and read me? The house is clean and full of goodwill—Come!" But though they never ceased trying, they could never penetrate to those inner chambers. Sometimes—though they might be talking of most trivial matters—the appeal would suddenly grow pathetic, almost plangent, "What is this that shuts me off from you? We sit together and love one another: why am I set apart?" Time was when he had seemed to them consciously reticent, almost of set purpose; but now it was they who, looking within the doorway, saw the dead woman standing there with finger on lip.

He made no intimate friends at Cambridge; yet

was popular and something of a figure in his College, which had marked him down for high—perhaps the highest — university honours, and was pleasantly astonished to find him also a good cricketer. His good looks attracted men; they asked his name, were told it, and exclaimed, "Bracy? Not the man Trinity is running for Senior Wrangler?" With this double reputation he might have won a host of friends, and his father and Miss Bracy would gladly have welcomed one, in hope that such companionship might exorcise the ghost: but he kept his way, liking and liked by men, yet aloof; with many acquaintances, censorious of none, influenced by none; avoiding when he disapproved, but not judging, and in no haste even to disapprove; easy to approach, and almost eager for goodwill, yet in the end inaccessible.

His first Easter vacation he spent with a reading-party in Cumberland. There he first tasted the "sacred fury" of the mountains and mountain-climbing, and in Switzerland the next August it grew to be a passion. He returned to it again and again, in Cumberland playing at the game with half a dozen fellow-undergraduates whom he had bitten with the mania; but in Switzerland during the Long vacations giving himself over to a glut of it, with only a guide and porter for company—sometimes alone, if he could ever be said to be alone. As in mathematics so in his sport, the cold heights were the mistresses he wooed; the peaks called to him, the rare atmosphere, the glittering wastes. He neither scorned danger nor was daunted by it. Below in the forests he would sing aloud, but the summits held him

silent. As an old pastor at Zermatt told Mr. Frank, he would come down from a mountain "like Moses, with his face illumined."

He started on his third visit to Switzerland early in July: in the second week in August Miss Bracy and Mr. Frank were to join him at Chamounix, and thence the three would make a tour together. He started in the highest spirits, and halted at the gate to wave his ice-axe defiantly. . . .

VI

The clergyman who ministered to the little tin English Church boarded at the big hotel, which kept a bedroom and a sitting-room at his disposal. They faced north from the back of the building, which stood against the mountain-side; but the sitting-room had a second window at the corner of the block, and from this the eye went up over a plantation of dark firs to the white snowfields of the Col and the dark jagged wall of the Aiguille du Géant—distant, yet as clear as if stencilled against the blue heaven. It was a delectable vision; but the clergyman, being short-sighted as a mole, had never seen it. He wore spectacles with a line running horizontally across them, and through these he peered at Mr. Frank and Miss Bracy as if uncertain of their distance.

Mr. Frank, in a suit of black, sat at the little round table in the centre of the room, pressing his finger-tips into the soft nap of a gaudy French table-cloth. Miss Bracy stood by the window with her back to the room, but she was listening. She too

wore black. The fourth person, at the little clergyman's elbow, was Christian the guide. It was he who spoke, while Mr. Frank dug his fingers deeper, and the clergyman nodded at every pause sympathetically, and both kept their eyes on the tablecloth, the pink and crimson roses of which on their background of buff and maroon were to one a blur only, to the other a pattern bitten on his brain.

"It must have been between noon and one o'clock"—the guide was saying—"when we crossed the Col and began on the rocks. I was leading, of course; the Herr next, and Michel"—this was their porter—"behind. We had halted and lunched at the foot of the rocks. They were nasty, with a coating, for the most part, of thin ice which we must knock away; but not really dangerous. The Herr was silent; not singing—he had been singing and laughing all through the morning—but in high spirits. He kept his breath now for business. I never knew him fatigued; and that day I had to beg him once or twice not to press the pace. Michel was tired, I think, and the wine he had taken earlier had upset his stomach; also he had been earning wages all the winter in England as a gentleman's valet and this was his first ascent for the year, so it may have been that his nerve was wrong.

"The first trouble we had with him was soon after starting on the rocks. We were roped; and at the first awkward place he said, 'If one of us should slip now, we are all lost.' The Herr was annoyed, as I have never seen him; and I too was angry, the more because what he said had some truth, but it

was not, you understand, the moment to say it. After this we had no great trouble until we had passed the place where Herr Mummery turned back. About thirty metres from the summit we came to a bit requiring caution; a small *couloir* filled with good ice but at a slope—so!" Here Christian held his open hand aslant, but Mr. Frank did not lift his eyes. "They anchored themselves and held me while I cut steps—large steps—across it. On the other side there was no good foothold within length of the rope, so I cast off, and the Herr came across in my steps with Michel well anchored. It was now Michel's turn, and having now the extra length of rope brought across by the Herr, I could go higher to a rock and moor myself firmly. The Herr was right enough where he stood, but not to bear any strain; so I told him to cast off that I might look to Michel alone. While he unknotted his rope I turned to examine the rock, and at that instant . . . Michel did not understand, or was impatient to get it over . . . at any rate he started to cross just as the Herr had both hands busy. He slipped at the third step . . . I heard, and turned again in time to see the jerk come. The Herr bent backward, but it was useless: he was torn from his foothold——"

The little clergyman nodded and broke in: "They were found, close together, on a ledge two thousand feet below. Your son, sir, was not much mutilated, though many limbs were broken—and his spine and neck. The bodies were found the next day and brought down. We did all that was possible. Shall I take you and madame to the grave?"

But the guide had not finished. "He fell almost on top of Michel, and the two went spinning down the *couloir* out of sight. I do not think that Michel uttered any cry: but the Herr, as the strain came and he bent backwards against it, seeking to get his axe free and plant it . . . though that would have been useless . . . the Herr cried once and very loud . . . such a strange cry!——"

"Madame will be glad," interrupted the clergyman again, who had heard Christian's story at the inquest,—"Madame will be glad"—he addressed Miss Bracy, who, as he was dimly aware, had been standing throughout with face averted, staring up at the far-away cliffs. "The young man's last thoughts——"

But Christian was not to be denied. He had told the story a score of times during the last three days, and had assured himself by every evidence that he could tell it effectively. He was something of an egoist, too, and the climax he had in mind was that of his own emotions in recrossing the fatal *couloir* ropeless, with shaking knees, haunted by the Englishman's last cry.

"Such a strange cry," he persisted. "His eyes were on mine for a moment . . . then they turned from me to the *couloir* and the great space below. It was then he uttered it, stretching out his hands as the rope pulled him forward—yet not as one afraid. 'Mother!' he cried: just that, and only once—'Mother!'"

Mr. Frank looked up sharply, and turned his head towards Miss Bracy. The clergyman and the guide also had their eyes on her, the latter waiting for the effect of his climax.

"It must be a consolation to you——" the clergyman began to mumble.

But Miss Bracy did not turn. Mr. Frank withdrew his eyes from her and fixed them again on the gaudy tablecloth. She continued to stare up at the clean ice-fields, the pencilled cliffs. She did not even move.

So Bassett was avenged.

THE CAPTURE OF THE *BURGOMEISTER VAN DER WERF*

A REPORTED TALE OF A DUTCHMAN AND A PRIVATEER

YES, a heap of folks have admired that teapot. Hundreds of pounds we must have been offered for it, first and last, since the night my wife's grandfather, Captain John Tackabird — or Cap'n Jacka, as he was always called—brought it into the family over the back-garden wall, and his funny little wife went for him with the broom-handle. Poor souls, they were always a most affectionate couple, and religious too, but not much to look at; and when he took and died of a seizure in the Waterloo year she wasn't long in following.

Ay, ay—very pleasant in their lives! though not what you would call lovely. I've heard that, through being allowed by his mother to run too soon, Tackabird's legs grew up so bandy, the other children used to drive their hoops between them. And next, at fifteen, what must he do but upset a bee-skip! A bee stung him, and all his hair came off, and for three parts of his natural life be went about as bald as an egg. To cap everything, he'd scarcely began courting when he lost his left eye in

a little job with the preventive men; but none of this seemed to make any difference to the woman. Peters her maiden name was—Mary Polly Peters; a little figure with beady black eyes. She believed that all Captain Jacka's defects would be set right in another world, though not to hinder her recognising him; and meantime the more he got chipped about the more she doted on what was left of the man.

Everyone in Polperro respected the couple, for Mary Polly kept herself *to* herself, and Captain Jacka was known for the handiest man in the haven to run a Guernsey cargo or handle a privateer, and this though he took to privateering late in life, in the service of the "Hand and Glove" company of adventurers. By and by Mr. Zephaniah Job, who looked after these affairs in Polperro—free-trade and privateering both—started a second company called the "Pride of the West," and put Captain Jacka to command their first ship, the old *Pride* lugger; a very good choice, seeing that for three years together he cleared over forty per cent. on the adventurers' capital.

The more was his disappointment when they built a new lugger, the *Unity*, one hundred and sixty tons, and Job gave the command to a smart young fellow called Dick Hewitt, whose father held shares in the concern and money to buy votes beside. I've told you how Jacka swallowed his pride and sailed as mate under this Hewitt, and how he managed to heap coals of fire on the company's head. Well that's one story and this is another. I'm telling now of the second boat, when Captain Jacka, or, as you might say, Providence—for what happened was none of his seek-

ing, and the old boy acted throughout as innocent as a sucking-child—left off shaming the company as honest men, and hit them slap in their pockets, where they could feel.

The bottom of the quarrel was that Mr. Job, the agent, took a dislike to Jacka. He was one of your sour, long-jawed sort, a bit of a lawyer, with a temper like Old Nick, and just the amount of decent feeling that makes a man the angrier for knowing he's unjust, especially when the fellow that's hit takes it smiling instead of cursing; and more especially still when he carries but one eye in his head, and be dashed if you can tell whether its twinkling back at you out of pure sweetness of nature or because it sees a joke of its own. I believe Captain Jacka twinkled back on Mr. Job as he twinkled on the rest of the world, willing to be friends and search for the best side of everyone, if he might be allowed. But Mr. Job couldn't be sure of this, and I'm fain to admit the old boy was a trial to him, with his easy-going ways. Job, you see, was a stickler for order; kept his accounts like the Bank of England, all in the best penmanship, with black and red ink, and signed his name at the end with a beautiful flourish in the shape of a swan, all done with one stroke—he having been a schoolmaster in his youth, and highly respected at it until his unfortunate temper made him shy a child out of window, which drove him out of the business, as such things will. In young Dick Hewitt he had a captain to his mind: soap and tidiness and punctuality, and oil and rotten-stone for the very gun-swivels; all the crew touching caps, and nerve and

seamanship on top of all. Jacka admired the young spark, for all his boastfulness; for his own part he could do anything with a ship but keep her tidy. "What's the use of giving yourself on-necessary work?" he'd say in his mild manner, if he saw one of his hands coiling a rope or housing a sail neatly. "We may be wantin' it any minute, and then you'll be sorry for labour thrown away." The dirtiness of his decks was a caution, and this was the queerer because in his own parlour you might have eaten your dinner off the floor. "I reckon," he'd explain, "when the Lord made sea and land He meant there should be a difference, and likewise when He made man and woman," and stuck to his untidiness afloat because it made him the gladder to be at home again. Mary Polly, though she lived within forty yards of the sea, and was proud of her husband as any mortal woman, would never step on board a boat. The sight of one (she declared) turned her stomach, and she married their only child to a house-decorator.

All this untidiness was poison to Mr. Job, and it worked inside the man until he was just one simmering pot of wrath, and liable to boil over at the leastest little extra provocation.

One day—it was the tenth of July in the year 'nine; Peter's Tide, and the Upper Town crowded with peep-shows and ranter-go-rounds, and folks keeping the feast—Mr. Job takes a stroll down the quay past the sweet-standings, and cocks his eye over the edge, down upon the deck of the old *Pride* that was moored alongside and fitting out for a fresh cruise. And there, in the shade of the quay

wall, sat old Captain Jacka with a hammer, tap-tapping at a square of tinplate.

"Hullo!" Mr. Job hailed. "Where's the crew?"

"Up riding the hobby-horses, I b'lieve," answered Jacka, as friendly as you please.

"And in thirty-six hours you've engaged to have the *Pride* ready for sea!"

"She's about ready now," said Jacka, stopping to put a peppermint in his mouth. He had bought a packet off one of the sweet-standings, and spread it on the deck beside him. "Feast-day doesn't come round more than once a year, and I haven't the heart to deny them, with the work so well forward, too." The old fellow fairly beamed across his deck, the raffle of which was something cruel. "There's a fat woman up there, too. I'm told she's well worth seeing."

"You call that dirty mess 'being fit for sea'?" asked Mr. Job, nodding down, but bottling up his anger after a fashion. "Look here, Captain Tackabird, you're a servant of the company; and I'll trouble you to stand up and behave respectful when the company's agent pays you a visit of inspection."

"Cert'nly, Mr. Job." Jacka scrambled up to his feet as mild as milk. "Beg your pardon, sir, I thought you'd just strolled down to pass the time of day."

"And don't flash that plaguey thing in my eyes, as you're doing." For Jacka was standing in the sunshine now, with the tinplate in his hands blazing away like a looking-glass.

"Very well, sir. Perhaps you'll allow me to

fetch a hat out of the cabin; for my head feels the heat powerful, being so bald. They do say it twinkles a bit, too, when the sun catches it the right way."

So down he went to the cabin, and up he came again to find Mr. Job with his best coat-tails spread, seated on the carriage of the *Pride's* stern-chaser.

"Oh, Lord!" he couldn't help groaning.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, Mr. Job, nothing." The fact was, Jacka had smeared a dollop of honey on that very gun-carriage to keep the wasps off him while he worked. The sweet-standings, you see, always drew a swarm of wasps on feast-days, and the old man never could abide them since his accident with the bee-skip.

Mr. Job sat there with his mouth screwed up, eyeing the whole length of the lugger.

"I'd like to know why you were hammering out that tinplate?" said he. "I can see with my own eyes you've been knocking dents in the deck; but I s'pose that wasn't your only object."

"I reckoned to tack it over this here hole in the bulwarks where the tide swung her up against the quay-end." Captain Jacka showed him the place.

"I'd have let you have a fresh plank if you'd only reported the damage in time."

"Oh," said Jacka, "a scrap of tin will answer just as well—every bit."

"I can't think, Captain Tackabird, how it comes that you've no more regard for appearances. Just

look at the *Unity*, for instance, and how young Hewitt keeps her."

"Born different, I suppose."

"Ay, and if you don't look out you'll end different. Patching a boat with tin!" Mr. Job let out a rasping kind of laugh. "But that's Polperro, all over. Do you know what they tell about you, down to St. Ann's?"—Mr. Job came from St. Ann's—"They say, down there, that every man-child in Polperro is born with a patch in the seat of his——"

Mr. Job stood up and cast a hand behind him, to explain. . . .

"I put it there to keep off the wopses," said Captain Jacka.

. . . . . .

"But what did he say?" asked Mary Polly, when her husband brought home the tale.

"First he said, 'I'll make you pay for this.' Well, that was fair enough, for I ought to have warned him; but when I asked the price, and where the stuff could be matched—for 'twas his best suit, you understand—all of a sudden he stamps his foot and lets fly with the most horrible oaths. It fairly creamed my flesh to hear him. He's a man of wrath, my love, and the end of him will be worse than the beginning."

"I daresay; but he'll give you the sack before that happens."

The two poor old souls looked at one another; for Job had control of all the privateering companies in Polperro, and influence enough to starve a man out of the place.

"Lev us take counsel of the Lord," said the old boy, as she knew he would. So down on their knees they went, and prayed together. Jacka even put up a petition for Mr. Job, but Mary Polly couldn't say "Amen" to that.

The next morning Captain Jacka went down to the *Pride* at the usual hour, but only to find his crew scrubbing decks and Mr. Job ready for him. "There's your marching orders," says the enemy, handing him a paper; "and if you want a character at any time, just come to me, and I'll give you a daisy."

Well, the old chap said no word, but turned about then and there, and back along the quay like a man in a dream. All the way he kept fumbling the document without daring to open it, and when he reached his own door he just sat down on the little low wall outside, laid the cursed thing on his knee, pulled a bandanna out of his breeches pocket, and polished the top of his poor head till it fairly blazed in the eye of the sun.

He was sitting there, dazed and quiet, when the door opened and out came Mary Polly with a rag-mat in her hand, meaning to bang it against the wall, as her custom was.

"Hullo!" says she, stopping short on the threshold. "Back again, like a bad penny?"

"Bad enough, this time," says her husband, without turning round; and drops his head with a groan.

I must say the woman's behaviour was peculiar. For first of all she stepped forward and gave his head a stroking, just as you might a child's, and then she looks up and down the street, and says,

"I'm ashamed of 'ee, carryin' on like this for all the public to see. Stick your hands in your pockets," says she.

"What's the use of that?" But he did it.

"Now whistle."

"Eh?"

"Whistle a tune."

"But I can't."

"You can if you try; I've heard you whistlin' 'Rule Britannia' scores of times, or bits of it. Now I'm goin' to beat this mat and make believe to be talkin' to 'ee. At the very first sound old Mrs. Scantlebury 'll poke her head out, she always does. So you go on whistlin', and don't mind anything I say. There'll be no peace in life for us after she gets wind you've been sacked; and just now I want a little time to myself to relieve my feelin's."

So Jacka started to whistle, feeling mighty shy, and Mary Polly picked up the mat.

"I wish," says she to the mat, "you was Mr. (whang) Zephaniah (whang) Job (whang). I do dearly wish for my life you was Mr. (whang) Zephaniah (whang) Job (whang). I'd take your ugly old head with its stivery grey whiskers and I'd (bang, whang)—I'd (bang, whang)—I'd treat you like this here mat, and lay you down for folks to wipe their shoes upon, Mr. (whang) Zephaniah (whang) Job (whang)."

"When Britain first at Heaven's command," whistled Jacka; and the Widow Scantlebury, two doors up the street, was properly taken in. An hour later, when the news of Jacka's dismissal was all over

the town, she had to sit down and consider. "I see'd him come up the street"—this was how she told the story, being the sort of woman that never knows where the truth ends—"just as Mary Polly was shaking out her mat. He came up like a whipped dog, stuck his hands in his pockets and started to whistle, for all the world like a whipped dog, you understand? Any fool could see the man had something on his mind and wanted to break it gentle. But not she! Went on banging the mat, if you'll believe me, till my flesh ached to see a woman so dull-minded. Of course it wasn' no business of mine, tho' you *would* think, after living with a man thirty years——" and so on, and so on.

But when Mary Polly had relieved her feelings, and the two old souls were in the kitchen with the door shut behind them, they came very near to breaking down. You see, Captain Jacka had followed the trade in Polperro all his days, and his heart was in it till Mr. Job pulled him up by the roots. He and Mary Polly had saved a little, and looked forward to leaving it to their only child—my wife's mother, that was; and anyway it wasn't enough to maintain them, let be that to touch a penny of it would have burnt their fingers. No; Captain Jacka must find a new billet.

But in a month or so, when folks had given up sympathising—for Mary Polly hated to be pitied, and gave them no encouragement—he saw plain enough that there was no billet for him in a small place like Polperro where Mr. Job ruled the roost. Before Christmas his mind was made up; and early in Christmas week he said good-bye to his wife,

marched up to Four Turnings with his kit on his back, and shipped on board Boutigo's Two-Horse Conveyance for Falmouth.

There was a Mr. Rogers living at Falmouth who had been a shareholder in the old "Hand and Glove" company, but had sold out over some quarrel with Mr. Job; and to him Jacka applied.

"I'm told that seamen are scarce, sir," says he. "I was wondering if you could find me a berth anywhere, for I've 'arned forty per cent. for my employers before now, and could do it again, but for a man of my unfortunate looks 'tis hard to get a start."

Mr. Rogers tapped the desk with his ruler, like one considering. "Why have they turned you out?" he asked. "Anything professional?"

"How could *I* help Mr. Job's sitting down on a lump of honey? I put it to you, sir, as a business man."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Mr. Rogers. "Let's have the story."

So out it all came. "He's a man of wrath," said Captain Jacka, "and he'll be sorry for it when he comes to die."

"There's one or two," said Mr. Rogers, "would like to hurry that reckoning a bit. Well, well, I can make shift to fit you up with something for a week or two, and maybe by that time there'll be an opening aboard one of the Packets. Just now, in Christmas week, business is slack enough, but what do you say to going mate on a vessel as far as the Downs?"

"Nothing I should like better," says Jacka.

"You'd better have a look at her first," says Mr. Rogers.

So he takes Jacka off to the Market Strand, calls for a waterman's wherry, and inside of ten minutes they were being pulled out to the Roads.

"There's your ship," says Mr. Rogers, as they pushed out beyond the old dock into Carrick Roads.

Jacka opened first his eyes and then his mouth. The vessel was a kind of top-sail schooner, but with a hull there was no mistaking, the more by token that the tide was swinging her stern-on, and showing him a pair of windows picked out in red paint, with shutter-boards and brass hinges shining.

"Mr. Rogers," he said, "I han't read the *Sherborne Mercury* lately, but is—is the war over?"

"No, nor likely to be."

"But, Mr. Rogers, sir, either that there ship is a Dutchman or else I be."

"Look at her flag, you old fool."

"Never see'd the like of it."

"That's the flag of the Principality of Nibby-Gibby. Ever heard of it?"

"Can't say I have."

"No more did I till the day before yesterday, and I won't swear I've got it right yet. But 'tis somewhere up the Baltic I understand. That there ship—her name, by the way, is the *Burgomeister Van der Werf*—is bound up Channel with sugar from Jamaica—with a licence. Maybe you folks up to Polperro don't know what that means?"

"I only know that, if I'd ran across her in the old *Pride*, I'd have clapped a crew on board and run her into a British port and no questions asked."

Says Mr. Rogers, "If that's the way you Polperro men keep abreast of Board of Trade regulations, it strikes me you might have done worse than lose your billet with the *Pride of the West*."

In the time left before the waterman brought them alongside, Mr. Rogers explained, as well as he could, the new system (as it was then) of licences; by which the Government winked at neutral vessels carrying goods into the enemy's ports, in spite of the blockade, and bringing us back Baltic timber for shipbuilding.

"But a Dutchman isn' no neutral," Captain Jacka objected.

"I did hear," said Mr. Rogers, stroking his chin and looking sideways, "that these licences have their market-price, and that in Amsterdam just now it's seven hundred rix-dollars."

"Well-a-well, if the Board of Trade's satisfied," says Jacka, "it's not for the likes of me to object. But if I was a Christian ruler I should think twice afore invitin' such a deal of hard swearin'."

"You'll find Captain Cornelisz a Lutheran," Mr. Rogers assured him, "and a very sociable fellow, with the little English he can muster."

Well, to make my story short, Jacka stepped on board and found the Dutch skipper monstrous polite and accommodating, though terrible sleepy, the reason being that, his mate falling sick at Kingston of the yellow fever, he had been forced to navigate his vessel home single-handed. He owned up, too, that he had a poor head for ciphering, so that 'twas more by luck than good management he'd hit off the Channel at all. At any rate he was glad enough

of a chance to shift off responsibility and take a sound nap, and inside of half an hour the bargain was struck over a glass of hot schnapps. Mr. Rogers shook hands and put off for shore again, and a boat went with him to fetch Jacka's kit, which he'd left in the office.

At six o'clock the *Van der Werf* weighed anchor and headed out under easy canvas. The wind outside was almost dead contrary, E. by N. and ½ E., and blowing a little under half a gale, but the skipper seemed in a hurry, and Jacka didn't mind.

"She's a good boat by all seeming," said he as they cleared St. Anthony's light; "but she wants a sea-way. I reckon, sir, you'd better stay on deck for a tack or two, till I find how she comes about. I'm accustomed, you see, to something a bit sharper in the bows, and just at first that may tempt me to run it too fine."

"Who wants you to run it fine at all?" asked Captain Cornelisz.

"Well, naturally you'll work it in short tacks and hug the English side pretty close."

"Short tacks? Not a bit of it; tide'll be running up strong by time we're out in deep water. Put her right across for France, keep her pretty full—she won't bear pinching—and let her rip."

"Risky."

"How's that?"

"*Chasse-marées* are pretty thick, I'm told, once you get near t'other side, 'specially between Morlaix and Guernsey, let alone a chance of dropping across a French cruiser."

"My good man, I've been stopped twice on this voyage already by French cruisers: once off Brest, and the second time about fifty miles this side of Ushant."

"You don't tell me!" says Jacka. "How the dickens did they let you go?"

"Well," answers the Dutchman, "I took the precaution of fitting myself *with two sets of papers.* Oh," says he, as Jacka lets out a low whistle, "it's the ordinary thing in our line of business. So you just do as I tell you and make the boards as long as you please, for I'm dropping with sleep in my boots. Keep the ship going, and if you sight anyone that looks like trouble just give me a hail down the companion, for I can talk to any frigate, British or French."

With that he bundled away below, and Jacka, after a word or two with the man at the helm, to make sure they understood enough of each other's lingo, settled down with his pipe for the night's work.

The wind held pretty steady, and the *Van der Werf* made nothing of the cross-seas, being a beamy craft and fit for any weather in a sea-way. Jacka conned her very careful, and decided there was no use in driving her; extra sail would only fling up more water without improving her speed. So he jogged along steady, keeping her full and by, and letting her take the seas the best way she liked them. Towards morning he even began to doze a bit, till warned by a new motion of the ship that she wasn't doing her best. He opened his eyes and shouted—

"Up with your helm, ye lubber! Hard up, I tell ye, and keep her full!"

A pretty heavy spray at that moment came over the bow and took him fair in the face, and he stumbled aft in none too sweet a temper. Then he saw what had happened: the fresh hand at the wheel had dozed off where he stood and let the *Van der Werf* run up in the wind. The fellow was little more than a boy, and white in the face with want of sleep. Captain Jacka was always a kind-hearted man. Said he, as he flung the spokes round, and the *Van der Werf* began to pay off: "Look here, my lad, if you can't keep a better eye open, I'll take a trick myself. So go you forward and stow yourself somewheres within call."

With that he took the helm, and glad of it, to keep himself awake; and so held her going till daybreak.

By eight in the morning, just as the light began creeping, and Jacka was calculating his whereabouts, he lifted his eye over the weather-bow, and—

"Hullo!" he sings out. "What's yonder to windward?"

The lad he'd relieved jumps up from where he'd been napping beside the bitts, and runs forward. But, whatever he sang out, Jacka paid no attention; for by this time his own one eye had told him all he wanted to know, and a trifle more; and he clutched at the wheel for a moment like a man dazed. Then, I believe, a sort of heavenly joy crept over his face, mixed with a sort of heavenly cunning.

"Call up the crew," he ordered. "I'm going to

put her about. The whole crew—every man-Jack of them!"

By the time the men tumbled up, Jacka had his helm up, and the *Van der Werf*, with sheets pinned, was leaning to it and knocking up the unholiest sputter.

"All right, my lads. Don't stand glazing at me like stuck pigs. Stand by to slacken sheets. I'm going to gybe her."

Well, they obeyed, though not a man of them could guess what he was after. Over went the big mainsail with a jerk that must have pitched Captain Cornelisz clean out of his bunk below; for half a minute later he comes puffing and growling up the companion and wanting to know in his best Dutch if this was the end of the world, and if not, what was it?

"That's capital," says Jacka, "for I was just about stepping down to call you. See that lugger, yonder?" He jerked his thumb over his shoulder at a speck in the grey from which the *Van der Werf* was now running at something like nine knots an hour.

"Well?"

"I know that lugger, and we're running away from her."

"Pack of stuff!" says Captain Cornelisz, or Dutch to that effect. "D'ee want to be told a dozen times that this is a licensed ship?" And he called for his flag, to hoist it.

"Oh, drop your fancy pocket-handkerchiefs, and listen to reason, that's a dear man! *O' course* I know you carry a licence; but the point is—the

lugger don't know. *O' course* I'm running away from her, by your leave; but the point is—she can run and reach three miles to our two. And lastly, *o' course* you're master here, and can do what you please; but, if you're not pressed for time, there's money in it, and you shan't say I didn't give you the chance."

Captain Cornelisz eyed Jacka for a full minute, and then a dinky little smile started in one eye and spread till it covered the whole of his wide face.

"You're a knowing one," said he.

"Was never considered so," answered Jacka, very modest.

"She's put about and after us," said the skipper, after a long stare over his right shoulder.

"She'll have us in less than three hours. There's one thing to be done, and that's to stow me somewheres out of the way; for if anyone on board of her catches sight of me, the game's up. S'pose we try the lazarette, if you have such a place. I like fresh air as a rule, but for once in a while I don't mind bein' squoze; and, as lazarettes go, yours ought to be nice and roomy."

"You shall have a bottle of Hollands for company," promised Captain Cornelisz.

So the hatch was pulled up, and down Jacka crept and curled himself up in the darkness. The Dutchman provisioned him there with a bottle of strong waters and a bag of biscuits, and—what's more—called down to him so long as was prudent and kept him informed how the chase was going.

By this time the lugger—which I needn't tell you was Mr. Zephaniah Job's pet *Unity*, with

Captain Dick Hewitt commanding — was closing down on the *Van der Werf*, overhauling her hand-over-fist. Down in the lazarette Jacka had scarcely finished prising the cork out of his bottle of Hollands when he heard the bang of a gun. This was the lugger's command to round-to and surrender; and the old boy, who had been vexing himself with fear that some cruiser might drop in and spoil sport, put the bottle to his mouth and drank Mr. Job's very good health.

"For I think," says he to himself, with a chuckle, "I can trust Cap'n Dick Hewitt to put his foot into this little mess just as deep as it will go."

With that, being heavy after his night's watch, he tied up his chin in his bandanna handkerchief to keep him from snoring, curled round, and dropped off to sleep like a babe.

. . . . . .

Well, sir, Cap'n Dick Hewitt brought-to his prize, as he reckoned her; and when he came aboard and sized up the cargo and the *Unity's* luck, as he reckoned it, his boastfulness was neither to hold nor to bind. No such windfall had been picked up for the *Pride of the West* during the four years he'd been in the company's service. He scarce stayed to give a glance at the *Van der Werf's* papers, though Captain Cornelisz was ready for him with the wrong set. "I guess," says he, "you'll spare yourself the trouble to pretend you ain't a Dutchman"; and when the skipper flung his arms about and began to jabber like a play-actor, 'twas "All right, Mynheer; we'll talk about that at Falmouth. Look here, boys," he sings out to his boarding

party, "we've something here too good to be let out of sight. My idea is to reach back for Polperro in company, and let Mr. Job and the shareholders have a view of her before taking her round to Falmouth. It won't cost us three hours extra," says he, "and a little bit of a flourish is excusable under the circumstances."

So up for Polperro they bore, half a dozen men from the lugger working the *Van der Werf*, and old Captain Jacka asleep in her lazarette till roused out of his dreams by the rattle as they cast anchor half a cable's length outside the haven. The tide was drawing to flood and the evening dusking down, and in sails Captain Dick in the *Unity* as big as bull's beef, and shouts his news to all the loafers on the quay.

"But come and take a look at her for yourself," says he to Mr. Job, who had stepped down with his best telescope.

Job put off that evening in something like a flutter of spirits; for to tell the truth half a dozen of the shareholders had been cutting up rough over his treatment of Jacka, and here was an answer for them, and proof that he'd been right in preaching up Dick Hewitt to be worth ten of the old man.

Alongside he comes in the *Unity's* boat, steps aboard, and makes a polite leg to Captain Cornelisz, with any amount of sham sympathy in his eye.

"Dear, dear," says he, "this is a very unfort'nit business for you, Cap'n What's-your-name! In time of war I s'pose such things must happen; but I can't help feelin' sorry for you," says he.

"I was thinkin' to reckon the damage at six hundred pounds," says the Dutch skipper, meek as you please.

"Hey?" says Mr. Job.

"Well, sir, I likes to be reasonable; but it's a question of missing the convoy, and under the circumstances—case of illegal detention at the best—you won't consider six hundred pounds out of the way. Of course," says he, "I haven't been allowed to study your lugger's papers, so it may be flat piracy. But if your skipper had taken the trouble to study mine——"

"What in thunder is he telling about?" demanded Mr. Job.

"Only this, sir," answered Captain Cornelisz, smiling very sweet, and pulling out his licence from his side-pocket, he read, "'And the said vessel has our protection while bearing any flag except the French, and notwithstanding the documents accompanying the said vessel and cargo may represent the same to be destined to any neutral or hostile port, or to whomsoever such property may appear to belong.' The wording you see, sir, is very particular, and under the circumstances I can't say less than six hundred pounds; but, of course, if you oblige me to take it to the courts, there's your papers to be considered, which may raise the question of piracy."

. . . . . .

Just an hour later, when Mr. Job had returned to shore in the devil's own temper to call a hasty meeting of his shareholders—and Captain Hewitt along with him, with his tail between his

legs — Captain Cornelisz raised the trap of the lazarette.

"I'm thinking a little fresh air's no more than you deserve," said he.

"But where are we, in this world?" asked Jacka.

"So well as I can learn, 'tis a place called Polperro."

Jacka chuckled. "Seen anything of a party called Job?"

"He's to bring me six hundred pounds before morning," answered the Dutchman, lighting his pipe. "And see here—I'm a fair-dealin' man, and I own I owe you a good twenty of it. You shall have it when you leave the ship, and I'll chance making it right with the owners."

"Very good of you, to be sure," allowed Jacka.

"But that isn't all. I owe you something on my own account, and if there's any small favour I can do you, in reason——"

"Well, since you put it so friendly, I'd like an hour or so ashore."

"Ashore? What, to-night?"

"It's my home, you see," Jacka explained; "and my old woman lives there."

"You don't say so? Well, you shall be put ashore as soon as you please. Anything else?"

"I see'd a very pretty teapot and sugar basin in your cabin yestiddy. I don't know if you set any particular store by them; but if you don't, my old woman's terrible fond of china, and you can deduct it out of the twenty pounds, if you like."

"Shouldn't think of it," says Captain Cornelisz;

" they're best Nankin, and they're yours. Anything else?"

" Well, if I might ask the loan of a pair of your breeches till to-morrow. They seem to me a bit fuller in the seat than mine, and let alone being handy to carry the china in, they'll be a kind of disguise. For, to tell the truth, I don't want to be seen in Polperro streets to be mixed up with this business, and my legs be so bandy that in any ordinary small clothes there's no mistaking me, even in the dark."

. . . . . .

So the *Van der Werf's* boat landed Jacka that night in pitch darkness half a mile west of the haven, where a ridge of rock gives shelter from the easterly swell. And just half an hour later, as Mary Polly turned in her sleep, she heard a stone trickle down the cliff at the back of the cottage and drop thud! into the yard under her window. She sat bolt upright in bed. " There's some villain of a thief after my Minorca's eggs," said she.

Another stone trickled and fell. Like the woman of spirit she was, she jumped out of bed, crept downstairs to the kitchen, picked up the broom, and listened, with her hand on the latch of the back-door.

She heard the scrape of a toe-plate on the wall outside.

This was too much. " You mean, sneakin', snivellin', pilferin', egg-stealin' highwayman!" cries she, and lets fly.

Well, sir, the sugar basin was scat to atoms, but the teapot, as you see, didn' suffer more than

a chip. The wonder was, she stayed her hand at the second stroke, old Jacka being in no position to defend himself or explain. In later days when she invited her friends to tea, she used to put it down to instinct. "Something *warned* me," she'd say. But that's how the teapot came into our family.

KING O' PRUSSIA

A REPORTED TALE OF A SMUGGLER, A REVENUE CUTTER, AND AN OFFICIOUS MINISTER

YOU have heard tell, of course, of Captain John Carter, the famous smuggler of Prussia Cove, and his brothers Harry, Francis, and Charles, and Captain Will Richards, "Tummels," Carpenter Hosking, Uncle Billy, and the rest of the Cove boys; likewise of old Nan Leggo and Bessie Bussow that kept the Kiddlywink[1] there? Well, well, I see our youngsters going to school nowadays with their hair brushed, and I hear them singing away inside the classroom for all the world as if they were glad to grow up and pay taxes; and it makes me wonder if they can be the children of that old-fangled race. Sometimes I think it's high time for me to go. There was a newspaper fellow down here when the *General Walker* came ashore, and, after asking a lot of questions, he put the case in a nutshell. "You're a link with the past," he said; "that's what you are." I don't know if he invented the expression, or if he picked it up somewhere and used it on me, but it's a terrible clever one.

[1] Drinking-house.

You mustn't think I'm boasting. I never knew Captain John; he died in the year 'seven, and I wasn't born for twelve months after. But I've shaken hands with Captain Harry—the one who was taken prisoner by the French, and came near to losing his head. He spent his latter years farming at Rinsey and local preaching; a very earnest man. He gave me my first class-ticket—that was in the late twenties, and not long before his death. And Captain Will Richards I knew well; he took over the business after Captain John, and lasted down to the Crimea year. I carried the coffin; eighty-five his age was, according to the plate on it; but, of course, the business had come to an end long before.

Everybody calls it Prussia Cove in these days. The visitors ask for Prussia Cove, and go and crane their heads over. You know the place?—just east of Cuddan Point. It's three coves really: Pisky's Cove, Bessie's Cove, and Prussia. The first has no good landing, but plenty of good caves; east of that comes Bessie's, where the Kiddlywink stood, with a harbour cut in the solid rock, and a roadway, and more caves; and east of that, with a point and a small island dividing them, comes Prussia, where John Carter had his house. Before his time it was called Porthleah, but he got the nickname "King o' Prussia" as a boy, and it stuck to him, and now it sticks to the old place. The visitors crane their heads over (for you must do that to count the vessels in the harbour right underneath you), and ask foolish questions, and get answered with a pack of lies. There's an old tale for one, about a fellow

who heard that the real King of Prussia had been defeated by Napoleon Bonaparte. "Ah," says he, "I'm sorry for that man. Misfortunes never come single; not more'n six weeks ago he lost three hundred keg of brandy, by information, so I'm told." All nonsense! Porthleah never lost but one keg in all John Carter's time, and that was a leaky one in a pool at Pisky's which the custom-house fellows sniffed as they went by. To be sure, one day when the King was away from home, the collector came round from Penzance, seized a cargo, and carried it off to the Custom House store. What did Carter do when he came home and heard about it? He had agreed to deliver the goods by a certain day, his character for honest business was at stake and he wasn't going to disappoint his customers. So he rode into Penzance that night, broke open the Custom House store, and rode back with all his kegs; nothing else, mind you. When the officers next morning discovered what had happened, they allowed at once this was Carter's work, because he was an honest man and wouldn't take anything that didn't belong to him.

But the tale they tell oftenest is about the battery he kept on Enys Point, and how he opened fire with it upon His Majesty's vessel; and I want you to have the rights of *that* as I had it from Captain Will Richards himself. To hear folks speak you would think the King just opened fire and blazed away for the fun of it; whereas, with all his daring, he was the quietest, most inoffensive man in the trade, if only you let him alone. Mr.

Wearne, the collector, understood this, and it was not by his fault either that the firing came about, but all through an interfering woman and a preacher who couldn't mind his own business.

It began in this way. Bessie Bussow had a sister-in-law married and living over here in Ardevora—Ann Geen was the name of her—a daughter of Kitty Lemal. (You've heard tell of Kitty Lemal and her eight daughters, and her stocking full of guineas? No? Well there's another story for you one of these days.) This Ann was the youngest of the eight, and married John Geen latish in life, just in time to bring him a boy before he left her a widow; and after her mother Kitty died she and the boy lived together in the old house at Carne Glaze—Ugnes House[1] they used to call it. The boy, being the son of old parents, was a lean, scrag-necked child, with a lollopping big head, too clever for his years. He had the Lemals' pluck inside him though, for all his unhandy looks; and, of course, his mother thought him a nonesuch.

Well, with all the country talking about John Carter and his doings, you may fancy that every boy in Ardevora wanted to grow up in a hurry and be off to Prussia Cove a-smuggling. It took young Phoby Geen (his real name was Deiphobus) as bad as the rest. He had been over to the Cove with his mother on a visit to Bessie Bussow, and there in the Kiddlywink the King had patted him on his big head and given him a shilling. After that the boy gave his mother no peace. She, poor soul, wanted to make a preacher of him,

[1] Huguenot's house.

and wouldn't hear of his going; but often, after he had turned fifteen, she would be out of bed ten 'times of a night and listening at his door to make sure he hadn't run off in the dark.

I told you the boy was clever; and this is how he gained his end. There had always been a tale that the Ugnes House was haunted—the ghost being old Reginald Bottrell, Kitty Lemal's father, a very respectable sea-captain, who died in his bed with no reason whatever for being uncomfortable in the next world. Still, "walk" he did, or was said to; and one fine day the boy came to his mother with a pretty tale. It went that, the evening before, he and his young cousin, Arch'laus Bryant, had been lying stretched on their stomachs before the fire in the big room—he reading the *Pilgrim's Progress* by the light of the turves, and Arch'laus listening. The boys were waiting for their supper, and for Mrs. Geen to come back from her Saturday's shopping. Happening to look up as he turned a page, Phoby saw, on the steps which led down into the room, a brisk, stout little gentleman, dressed in a long, cutaway coat, black velvet waistcoat and breeches, black ribbed stockings, and pump shoes tied with a bow. He twinkled with brass or gilt buttons—one row down the coat and two rows down the waistcoat—and each button was stamped with a pattern of flowers. His head was bald, except for a bit of hair at the back; he had no hat; and when he turned, after closing the door behind him, Phoby took notice that his belly was round and as tight as a drum. The boy denied being frightened; "the gentleman," he said, "was

most pleasant-looking in all his features. I didn't take 'en for a sperat, but for somebody come to see mother. I stood up and said, 'Good eveling, sir. Mother 'll be back in a minute or two if you'll take a seat.'" "I'm not come for she, but for thee," he said; "Deiphobus Geen, idle no longer. Arise, take my advice, and go a-smuggling." And with that he vanished through the door.

The boy pitched this tale to his mother, and Arch'laus backed him up, adding that the ghost had turned to him and said, "Thou, too, Arch'laus in a year's time shall be a smuggler — p'r'aps sooner." He told this to his father and got strapped for it. But Mrs. Geen came of a family that believed in ghosts. The boy's tale described his grandfather to a hair—which was not wonderful considering how often she had talked to Phoby about the old man. At any rate, after being in two minds for a week she gave way, after a fashion, and allowed Phoby to run over to Prussia Cove to his aunt, Bessie Bussow; and Bessie—who loved spirit—had him apprenticed to Hosking, the Cove carpenter. Pretty carpenter's work Hosking was likely to teach him!

Now, after the way of women, the deed was no sooner done than Mrs. Geen began to repent it. She knew very well that her dear boy would run into danger; but she kept her trouble to herself until there arrived at Ardevora a new Methodist preacher called Meakin. In those days John Wesley himself used to pay us a visit pretty well every August or September, but this year, for some reason or other, he gave us an extra revival, and

sent down this Meakin to us at the beginning of June. For a very good reason he was never sent again.

He started very well indeed. You couldn't call him much to look at; he had a long pair of legs which seemed differently jointed to yours and mine; no shoulders nor stomach to speak of, no-coloured hair, and a glazing, watery eye. But the wonder began when you heard his voice. It filled his clothes out suddenly like one of those indiarubber squeakers the children blow at Whitsun Fair; and coming from a man whose looks were all against him, it made you feel humble-minded for having been so quick to judge. I think he had found out the value of this kind of surprise and went about neglecting his appearance on purpose.

As I say, he started very well. He preached at the Stennack on Saturday, and next day near the market-place, "for the sake," he said, "of those who could not climb the hill"—though, to be sure, they needn't have left their doors to hear him a mile off. There was a tidy gathering—farm-carts and market-carts and gigs from all parts of the country round—almost as many as if he had been John Wesley himself. He preached again at five o'clock in the evening, and so fired up Mrs. Geen that by ten next morning she was down at Nance's house, where he lodged, laying all her trouble before him.

Mr. Meakin heard her out, and then took a line which altogether surprised her. He seemed to care less for the danger her Phoby was running than for the crime he was committing. Yes; he called it a crime!

"As a Christian woman," he said, "you must know his soul's in danger. What in comparison with that does his body matter?"

Mrs. Geen hadn't any answer for this, so what she said was, "My Phoby 've never given me a day's trouble since his teething." And then, seeing the preacher was upset, and wishing to keep things as pleasant as possible, she went on, "I don't see no crime in learning to be a carpenter."

"By your own showing," said Mr. Meakin, "he is in danger of being led into smuggling by wild companions."

"Nothing wild about John Carter," she held out. "A married man and as steady as you could wish to see; a man with convictions of sin, as I know, an' two of his brothers saved. You couldn' hear a prettier preacher than Charles. And John, he always runs a freight most careful. I never heard of any wildness at all in connection with he — not a whisper."

The preacher fairly stamped, and began tapping the palm of his hand with his forefinger.

"But the smuggling, ma'am—that's what I call your attention to! The smuggling itself is not only a crime but a sin; every bit as much a sin as the violence and swearing which go with it."

"No swearing at all," said Ann Geen. "You don't know John Carter, or you wouldn' suggest such a thing. Every man that swears in his employ is docked sixpence out of his pay. My sister-in-law keeps the money in a box over her chimney-piece, and they drink it out together come Christmas."

By this the preacher was fairly dancing. "Woman!" he shouted, soon as he could recover his mouth-speech.

"I'm no such thing!" said she, up at once and very indignant. "And your master, John Wesley, would never have said it."

The preacher took a gulp and tried a quieter tack. "I beg your pardon, ma'am," says he, "but you seemed to be wilfully misunderstanding me. Let us confine ourselves to smuggling," says he.

"Very well," says she; "I'm agreeable."

"I tell you, then, that it's a sin; it's defrauding the King just as much as if you dipped your hand into His Majesty's pocket"—"I shouldn' dream of being so familiar," said Mrs. Geen, but he didn't hear her—"and if you'll permit me, I'll explain how that is," he said.

"Well," she allowed, folding the shawl about her which she always wore in the hottest weather; "you can say what you mind to about it, so long as you help me get my Phoby back. That's what I come for."

I daresay, now, you've sometimes heard it brought up against us in these parts that we're like the men of Athens, always ready to listen to any new thing. The preacher took up his parable then and there; and being, as I say, an able man in spite of his looks, within half an hour he had actually convinced the woman that there was something to be ashamed of in smuggling. And as soon as he'd done that, nothing would satisfy her but to hire the pony-cart from the George and Dragon and drive the preacher to Prussia Cove the

very next day to rescue her boy from these evil companions. "'Twould be a great thing to convince John Carter," she said, "and a feather in your cap. And even if you don't, the place is worth seeing, and he usually kills a pair of ducks for visitors."

So early the next day (Tuesday, June 4), away they started; and, the day being hot and the pony slow, arrived at Bessie Bussow's about four o'clock. 'Tis a pretty peaceable spot on a June afternoon, with the sun dropping out to sea and right against your eyes; and this day the Cove seemed more peaceable than ordinary—the boats at anchor, no sound of work at all, and scarcely a sign of life but the smoke from Bessie Bussow's chimney.

"Where's my boy?" was the first question Mrs. Geen put to her sister-in-law after the two women had kissed each other.

"Out seaning," answered Bessie, as prompt as you please. "But most likely he'll be home some time to-night. The master's got a new sean-boat, and all the boys be out working her. There's not a soul left in the Cove barring the master himself and Uncle Billy."

"Well, I'm glad of my life the boy's at such innocent work; but I've come to see John Carter and take him away. The preacher here says that smuggling is a sin and the soul's destruction; he's quite sure of it in his own mind, and whiles there's any doubt I don't want my Phoby to risk it."

"Aw?" said Bessie. "I'd dearly like to hear how he makes that out. But I han't got time to be talking just now. You'd best take him across

and let him try to persuade John Carter, while I get your room ready. I saw John going towards his house ten minutes ago, and I'se warn he'll offer the preacher a bed and listen to all he's got to say."

So, having stabled the pony, Mrs. Geen and the preacher walked over to Carter's house together. They found the King in his kitchen-parlour, divided between his accounts and a mug of cider, and he made them welcome, being always fond of preachers and having a great respect for Ann Geen because of her family.

There was a great heap of shavings in the fireplace, for the room was a sunny one, facing south by west. But the King told her where to find some tea that had never paid duty, and she took off her bonnet and boiled the kettle in the kitchen at the back, and it wasn't till they'd drunk a cup that she explained what had brought her, and called on the preacher to wrestle.

Captain John listened very politely, or seemed to, and nodded his head at the right time; but he couldn't help being a bit absent-minded. Fact was, he expected a cargo home that very evening, and didn't feel so easy about it as usual. Up to now he had always run his stuff in goodish-sized vessels —luggers or cutter-rigged craft running up to fifty or sixty tons as we should reckon now. But Captain Will Richards had taken a great fancy to the Cawsand plan of using light-built open rowboats or, as you might say, galleys, pulling eight oars, and put together to pass for sean-boats. After the war, when there was no longer any privateering, vessels like Captain Carter's, carrying eighteen or

twenty guns apiece, couldn't pretend to be other than smugglers or pirates, and then these make-belief sean-boats came into use everywhere. But just now they were a novelty. The King, persuaded by Richards, ordered one down from Cawsand, and had already used it once or twice to meet his larger craft somewhere in a good offing and tranship their cargoes. By this he could run his kegs ashore at any state of the tide, leaving the empty vessels to be watched or overhauled by the Customs' fellows.

But this time—the weather being fine and settled, and the winds light—he was trying a faster game, and had sent the sean-boat right across channel to Roscoff, keeping his sailing-craft in harbour. It would be dark before nine, no moon till after midnight, and by all calculations the boat ought to make the cove between ten and eleven, after lying well outside and waiting her chance. It all seemed promising enough, but somehow the King couldn't be quite easy.

However, he listened quietly, and the preacher talked away for one solid hour, until Uncle Billy Leggo (who had been keeping watch all the afternoon) came knocking at the door. "You'll excuse me a minute," said the King, and went outside to hear the report. The weather had been flat calm all day, with a slow ground-swell running into the cove, but with the cool of the evening a light offshore breeze had sprung up, and Uncle Billy had just seen the Revenue cutter stealing out from Penzance.

"Botheration!" said Captain Carter, and fined

himself sixpence. Then he went back to the parlour, and the preacher started afresh.

Twice again before supper came Uncle Billy with news of the cutter's movements, and the second time there could be no mistaking them, for she was dodging back and forth and lying foxy around Cuddan Point.

All through supper the preacher talked on and on, and the King ate without knowing what he was eating. He couldn't afford to lose this cargo; yet Mr. Collector Wearne meant business this time, and would collar the boat to a certainty unless she were warned off. But to show a light from the coast meant a hundred pounds fine or twelve months' hard labour. The King slewed round in his chair and looked at the great pile of shavings in the fireplace. A hundred pounds fine with the chance of burning the house-thatch about his ears!

Supper over, he and his guests turned their chairs towards the fireplace. The King took flint and steel and struck a match; lit his pipe, and stared at the shavings; then dropped the light on the floor, ground it out with his heel, and puffed away thoughtfully. The preacher went on talking.

"Render unto Cæsar . . . tribute to whom tribute is due. That applies to King George to-day every bit so much as it did to Cæsar."

"Cæsar and King George be two different persons," said Captain John, stopping his pipe with his thumb.

"The principle's the same."

"I don't see it," said the captain. "I read my Bible, and it says that Cæsar ordered the whole world to be taxed. Now that's sense. Cæsar didn't

go niggling away with a duty on silk here and another on brandy there and another on tea and another on East Indy calicoes. Mind you, I've got no personal feeling against King George; but it does annoy me to see a man calling hisself King of England and making money in these petty ways."

"It's his birthday to-day," put in Mrs. Geen; "though I didn't remember it till I saw the flag on Ardevora church-tower this morning."

"Is it? Then we'll drink his health, ma'am, to show there's no animosity." Captain John fetched a bottle of brandy and glasses and mixed drinks for his guests. Then he took his seat, reached out for flint and steel again, and says he very quietly—

"I wish the boys were at home. We'd have a bonfire."

"Up to Walsall—that's where I come from," said the preacher, "we always kept up His Majesty's birthday with a bonfire and fireworks. But you don't seem so loyal in these parts."

"Fireworks? Did you now?" Captain John set down the tinder-box and rubbed his chin. "Well," said he, going to a cupboard, and glancing up on his way at the tall clock, "as it happens I've a rocket or two here—though to be sure it seems like a waste, with nobody left in the Cove to see or raise so much as a cheer."

"It's the spirit of the thing that counts," said the preacher.

"They've lain here so long," Captain John went on in a sort of musing way, "they may be mildewed, for all I know."

"You leave that to me," said the preacher; "I

knows all about fireworks. There don't seem nothing wrong about this one," he said, taking it and fingering the fuse. "May I have a try with 'em?"

"Try, and welcome. I don't understand these things for my part: I only know they takes up a lot of room in the cupboard, and I'll be glad to see the last of 'em."

So out into the night they three went together. But when they had the rocket fixed, Captain John was taken that poorly he had to come back and sit in the chair, and rub his thighs and his stomach. And when, sitting there, he heard the rocket go up, *whoosh!* he had to rub them the harder.

"It went off capital!" called the preacher, popping his head in at the door. "Can't us try another?" And now Captain John had to rub his eyes before turning to him. "Take the lot," he said, and pushed the whole bundle into the preacher's hands. "Aw, if King George had a few more friends like you! Take the lot of 'em, loyal man!" He fairly thrust him out to door, and had to lean a hand there before he could follow, feeling weak all over to think of Collector Wearne and his men, and what their faces must be like, down in the Revenue cutter; but he had no time to taste the fun of it properly, for just then he heard Bessie Bussow's voice outside asking questions all of a screech. The first rocket had fetched her over hot-foot and agog, and the captain had to run out and stop her tongue, and send her home with Ann Geen. But they didn't go till the preacher had touched off every single rocket, stepping back as they went *whoosh! whoosh!* and waving his hat and crying, "God save the King!" "God save

the King!" cried Captain John after him, and Bessie stood wondering if the end of the world had come, or the master had gone clean out of his wits.

The captain used to try and explain it afterwards when he told the story. "You've seen a woman in hysterics," he'd say, "and you know how a man feels when he wants to drop work and go on the drink for a week. Well, 'twasn' exactly one or t'other with me, but a little like both. I'm a level-headed tradesman, and known for such, but if ever that chap walks into my house again, I'll be wise, and go straight out by the back door and put myself under restraint."

After the women had gone, he took the fellow back to the kitchen, and sat putting questions to him in a reverent sort of voice, and eyeing him as awesome as Billy Bennett when he hooked the mermaid, until the poor creature talked himself sleepy, and asked to be shown to his room. Captain Carter saw him to bed, came downstairs to the parlour again, and spread himself on the sofa for forty winks; for between the boat dodging out to sea and the pack-horses waiting ready up at Trenowl's farm above the hill, there was no going to bed for him that night.

He had been sleeping maybe for two hours, when a whistle fetched him to his feet and out of the door like a scout. 'Twas nothing more nor less than the boys' arrival signal, and this was what had happened.

When the preacher's first rocket went off, the collector, down on board the cutter, was taking his bit of supper in the cabin. At the sound of

it he rushed up the companion, and found all his crew on deck with their necks cricked back, barring one man, who that moment popped his head up through the fore-hatchway. "What on earth was that?" he asked. "A rocket, sir," said the chief boatman; "just sent up from Prussia Cove." Mr. Wearne couldn't find his breath for a moment; but when he did, 'twas to say, "Very well, John Carter. I've a-got you this time, my dandy! I don't quite understand how you come to be such a fool. But that rocket costs you a hundred pounds, and if I'm not mistaken I'll have your cargo 'pon top of it."

The breeze still blew pretty steady, and he gave orders to stand out into the bay, get an offing, and keep a sharp look-out as the moon rose. He knew that all Carter's ordinary craft, except the sean-boat, were quiet at anchor at Bessie's Cove; but he reckoned that the boat had gone out this time to meet and unload a stranger. He never dreamed she would be crossing all the way to Roscoff and back on her own account. He knew, too, that Carter had a "spot" near Mousehole to fall back upon when a landing at Prussia Cove couldn't be worked. So he stood out to put the cutter on a line commanding both places, which, with the soldier's wind then blowing, was easy enough; and as she pushed out her nose past Cuddan Point the whole sky began to bang with rockets.

This puzzled him fairly, as Carter knew it would. And it puzzled the Cove boys in the sean-boat as they lay on their oars about three miles from shore and discussed the first warning. But in one

of the flashes Captain Harry Carter, who was commanding, spied the cutter's sails quite plain under the dark of the land, plain enough to see that she was running out free. He knew that he couldn't have been seen by her in the heave of the swell, for the sean-boat lay pretty low with her heavy cargo, and he'd given her a lick of grey paint at Roscoff by way of extra precaution. So, thought he, "A signal's a signal; but brother John doesn't know what I know. Let the cutter stand out as she's going, and we'll nip in round the tail of her. She can't follow into the Cove, with her draught, even if she spies us; and by daybreak we'll have the best part of the cargo landed." And so he did, muffling oars and crossing over a mile to southward of the cutter, and after that way-all! and pull for the Cove.

The preacher at John Carter's, and Mrs. Geen at Bessie Bussow's, both woke early next morning. But Mrs. Geen was first by a good hour, and what pulled the preacher out of bed was the sound of guns. He put his head out of window, and could hardly believe it was the peaceful place he'd come upon last evening. The beach swarmed with men like emmets. Near up, by high-water mark, men were unloading a long-boat for dear life—some passing kegs, others slinging them to horses, others running the horses up the cliff under his window. At first he thought it must be their trampling had woke him out of sleep, but the next moment *bang!* the room shook all about him, a cloud of smoke drifted up towards him from the Enys Point, and through it, while 'twas clearing,

he saw John Carter and another man run to the battery and begin to load again, with Mrs. Geen behind them waving a rammer, and dancing like a paper-woman in a cyclone. Below the mouth of the Cove tossed a boatload of men, pulling and backing with their heads ducked, their faces on a level with their shoulders, and all turned back towards the battery, while a big red-faced man stood up in the stern-sheets shaking his fist and dancing almost as excitedly as Mrs. Geen. Still farther out, a fine cutter lay rocking on the swell, her bosom swinging and sails shaking in the flat calm.

The preacher dragged on his clothes somehow, tore out of the house and down to the Point as fast as legs would carry him. "Wha—what's the meanin' of this?" he screeched, rushing up to Captain John, who was sighting one of his three little nine-pounders.

"Blest if *I* know!" said the captain. "We was a peaceable lot enough till you and Mrs. Geen came a-visiting; but you two would play Hamlet's ghost with a Quaker meeting."

"It's my Phoby — they're after my Phoby!" screamed Mrs. Geen, and then she turned on the fellow behind Captain John; it was Hosking, once a man-of-war's man, and now supposed to be teaching her boy the carpentry trade. "*This* is what you bring en to, is it? You deceiver, you! You bare-faced villain!" (The man had a beard as big as a furze bush.) "Look at the poor lamb up there loadin' the hosses, and to think I bore and reared en for this! If you let one of they fellows lay hands

on my Phoby I'll scratch out ivery eye in your head . . ."

"Stand by, Tim," says the captain quietly. "Drat the boat! If she keeps bobbiting about like that I shall hit her, sure 'nuff!" *Bang!* went the little gun, and kicked backwards clean over its carriage. The shot whizzed about six feet above the boat, and plunged into the heaving swell between it and the cutter. "Bit too near, that. I don't want to hurt Roger Wearne, though he *do* make such tempting, ugly faces."

"But what do they want? What are they after?" stuttered the preacher.

"They're after my Phoby!" cried Mrs. Geen.

"Not a bit of it," said Captain John good-humouredly. "From all I can see it's the preacher here they want to collar."

"*Me!*" screams the poor man—"*me!*"

"Well, if you *will* go letting off rockets. I dunno what it costs up to Walsall, or wherever you come from, but down in these parts 'tis a hundred pound or twelve calendar months."

The preacher turned white and began to shake all of a sudden like a leaf. "But I didn't mean—I had no idea—you don't intend to tell me—" he stammered.

"Here, Tummels!" Captain John hailed a man who came running down to lend a hand with the guns. "Take the preacher here and fix him on one of the horses; sling a keg each side of him if he looks like tumbling off. Sorry to hurry you, sir," he explained; "but 'tis for your good. You must clear out of this before the officers get sight of your face, and I don't know how much longer I can

frighten 'em off. When you get up to Trenowl you can cast loose and run, and it mayn't be time wasted if you make up an *alibi* as you go along. It don't seem hospitable, I grant ee, but as a smuggler you're too enterprising for this little out-o'-the-way cove."

Tummels led the preacher away in too much of a daze to answer. He opened his mouth, but at that moment *bang!* went Hosking with another of the guns. By and by Captain John let out a chuckle as he saw the poor man moving up the cliff track, swaying between two kegs and clutching at his horse's mane every time Tummels smacked the beast on the rump. The horse he rode was almost the last. By seven o'clock the boys had cleared the whole of their cargo, and still the preventive boat hung in the mouth of the Cove, pulling and backing and waiting for the chance Captain John never allowed them.

You see, Captain Harry, having dodged in behind the cutter without being spied, had a pretty start with the unloading. When day broke, Mr. Wearne, finding no sean-boat or suspicious craft in sight, and allowing that there was no fear of another attempt before nightfall, had stood down again for Prussia Cove, meaning to send in a boat (for the cutter drew too much water) and have it out with Captain Carter about the rockets. You can fancy his face when he came abreast the entrance and found the boys working like a hive of bees. As for resistance, the King always swore he hadn't an idea of it till Mrs. Geen put it into his head. The battery was never intended for more than show. "She's a wonderful

woman," he declared; but he had a monstrous respect for all the Lemals. "Blood in every one of 'em," he said.

But, of course, the fun wasn't finished yet. Soon after seven, and after the last of the cargo had been salved under their eyes, the preventive men drew off. By a quarter past eight Wearne had worked the cutter in as close as he dared, and then opened fire with his guns. The first shot struck the 'taty-patch in front of Carter's house; the second plunked into the water not fifteen yards from the gun's muzzle. In the swell running she could make no practice at all, though she kept it up till midday. The boys behind the battery ran out and cheered whenever one flew extra wide, and this made Wearne mad. Will Richards, Tummels, and young Phoby Geen posted themselves in shelter behind the captain's house, and whenever a shot buried itself in the soft cliff one of them would run with a tubbal and dig it out. All this time Uncle Bill Leggo, having finished loading up the kegs, was carting water from the stream on the beach to the kitchen garden above the house, and his old sister Nan leading the horses (for it was a two-horse job). Richards called to him to leave out, it was too dangerous. "Now there," said Uncle Bill, "I've been thinkin' of Nan and the hosses this brave while!"

At noon Wearne ceased firing, and sent off a boat towards Penzance. The Cove boys still held the battery; and the two parties had their dinners, lit their pipes and studied each other all the long afternoon. But towards five o'clock a riding company arrived to help the law, and opened a musket fire

on the rear of the battery from the hedge at the top of the hill. The game was up now. The boys scattered and took shelter in Bessie Bussow's house, and Captain John, having hoisted a flag of truce, waited for Wearne and his boat with all the calmness in life.

"A pretty day's work this!" was the collector's first word as he stepped ashore.

"Amusin' from first to last," agreed Captain John in his cordial way.

Says the collector slowly, "Well, tastes differ. You may be right, of course, but we'll begin at the beginning, and see how it works out. First, then, at nine forty-five last night you showed an unauthorised light for the purpose of cheating the revenue. Cost of that caper, one hundred pounds."

"Be you talkin' of the rockets?"

"'Course I be."

"Well then, *I* didn't fire them, nor anyone belongin' to the Cove. I didn't set anyone to fire them, and they waren't fired to warn anybody. Let alone I have proof they was sent up by a Methody preacher to relieve his feelin's. You've known me too long, Roger Wearne, to think me fool enough to waste a whole future joy[1] over so simple a business as warnin' a boat."

"What are you tellin' me?"

"The truth, as I always do; and I advise you to believe it, or 'twon't be the first time you've seen too far into a brick wall."

Wearne knew well enough what Captain John meant. Just a year before he had paid a surprise

[1] *Feu de joie.*

visit to the Cove, ferreted out a locked shed and asked to be shown what was inside. The King refused. "It held nothing," he said, "but provisions for his brother Henry's vessel." Of course Wearne couldn't believe this; a locked store in Prussia Cove was much too sure a thing. So first he argued, and then he broke the door open, and, sure enough, found innocent provisions inside just as he'd been promised. Next morning the shed was empty. "Didn' I warn 'ee," said John, "against breaking in that door and leaving my property exposed. Now I'll have to make 'ee pay for it;" and pay for it Wearne did.

"All I know," the captain went on, "is that a Methody preacher paid me a visit last night, with the objic (so far as I can make out, for things have been movin' so fast I hadn't time to question en as I wished) o' teachin' me what was due to King George. In pursooance o' which—it being His Majesty's birthday—he took and fired a dozen rockets I keep on the off-chance of wantin' one of these days to signal the Custom House at Penzance. I own 'twas a funny thing to do, but folks takes their patriotism different. I daresay, now, *you* didn't even remember 'twas His Majesty's birthday."

Wearne tried a fresh tack. "We'll take that yarn later on," he said. "You can't deny a cargo was run this morning."

"We'll allow it for the moment. But that only proves that no boat was warned away."

"And when I sent a boat in to capture it, you deliberately opened fire; in other words, tried to murder me, His Majesty's representative."

"Tried to murder you? Look here." Captain John stepped to one of his still loaded guns and pointed it carefully at a plank floating out at the mouth of the Cove—a plank knocked by the cutter's guns out of Uncle Bill Leggo's 'taty patch, and now drifting out to sea on the first of the ebb. He pointed the gun carefully, let fly, and knocked the bit of wood to flinders. "That's what I do when I try," he said. "Why, bless 'ee, I was no more in earnest than *you* were!"

This made Wearne blush for his marksmanship. But "You'll have to prove that," he said.

"Why, damme," said John Carter, and fined himself another sixpence on the spot; "if you are so partic'ler, *get out there in the boat again, and I will.*"

Well, the upshot was that after some palaver Wearne agreed to walk up to the captain's house and reckon the accounts between them. He had missed a pretty haul and been openly defied. On the other hand he hadn't a man hurt, and he knew the King's Government still owed John Carter for a lugger he had lent two years before to chase a French privateer lying off Ardevora. Carter had sent the lugger round at Wearne's particular request; she was short handed, and after a running fight of three or four hours the Frenchman put in a shot which sent her to the bottom and drowned fourteen hands. For this, as Wearne knew, he had never received proper compensation. I fancy the two came to an agreement to set one thing against another and call quits. At any rate, John was put to no further annoyance over that day's caper. As for the preacher, I'm told that no person in these

parts ever set eyes on him again. And Ann Geen drove home that evening with her Phoby beside her. "I'm sorry to let 'ee go, my son," said John; "but 'twould never do for me to have your mother comin' over here too often. I've a great respect for all the Lemals; but on the female side they be too frolicsome for a steady-going trade like mine."

THE MAN WHO COULD HAVE TOLD

IT was ten o'clock—a sunny, gusty morning in early September — when H.M.S. *Berenice*, second-class cruiser, left the Hamoaze and pushed slowly out into the Sound on her way to the China Seas.

From the Hoe, on a grassy slope below the great hotel, John Gilbart watched her as she thrust her long white side into view between Devil's Point and the wooded slopes of Mount Edgcumbe; watched her as she stole past Drake's Island and headed up the Asia passage. She kept little more than steerage way, threading her path among anchored yachts gay with bunting, and now and then politely slowing in the crowd of smaller craft under sail. For it was regatta morning. The tall club flagstaff behind and above Gilbart's head wore its full code of signals, with blue ensign on the gaff and blue burgee at the topmast head, and fluttered them intermittently as the nor'westerly breeze broke down in flaws over the leads of the club-house. Below him half a dozen small boys with bundles of programmes came skirmishing up the hill through the sparse groups of onlookers. Off the promenade pier, where the excursion steamers bumped and reeked

and blew their sirens, the committee-ship lay moored in a moving swarm of rowboats, dingies, and steam-launches. She flew her B signal as yet, but the seconds were drawing on toward the five-minute gun; and beyond, on the ruffled Sound, nine or ten yachts were manœuvring and trimming their canvas; two forty-raters dodging and playing through the opening stage of their duel for the start; four or five twenties taking matters easy as yet; all with jackyards hoisted. To the eastward a couple of belated twenties came creeping out from their anchorage in Cattewater.

All this Gilbart's gaze took in; with the stately merchantmen riding beyond the throng, and the low breakwater three miles away, and the blue horizon beyond all. Out of that blue from time to time came the low, jarring vibration which told of an unseen gunboat at practice; and from time to time a puff of white smoke from the Picklecombe battery held him listening for its louder boom. But he returned always to the *Berenice* moving away up the Asia passage, so cautiously that between whiles she seemed to be drifting; but always moving, with the smoke blown level from her buff-coloured funnels, with clean white sides and clean white ensign, and here and there a sparkle of sunlight on rail or gun-breech or torpedo-tube. She was bound on a three-years' cruise; and Gilbart, who happened to know this and was besides something of a sentimentalist, detected pathos in this departure on a festival morning. It seemed to him—as she swung round her stern and his quick eye caught the glint of her gilded name with the muzzle of her six-

inch gun on the platform above, foreshortened in the middle of its white screen like a bull's-eye in a target—it seemed to him that this holiday throng took little heed of the three hundred odd men so silently going forth to do England's work and fight her battles. On her deck yesterday afternoon he had shaken hands and parted with a friend, a stoker on board, and had seen some pitiful good-byes. His friend Casey, to be sure, was unmarried—an unamiable man with a cynical tongue—with no one to regret him and no disposition to make a fuss over a three-years' exile. But at the head of the ship's ladder Gilbart had passed through a group of red-eyed women, one or two with babies at the breast. It was not a pretty sight: one poor creature had abandoned herself completely, and rocked to and fro holding on by the bulwarks and bellowing aloud. This and a vision of dirty wet handkerchiefs haunted him like a physical sickness.

Gilbart considered himself an Imperialist, read his newspaper religiously, and had shown great loyalty as secretary of a local sub-committee at the time of the Queen's Jubilee, in collecting subscriptions among the dockyardsmen. Habitually he felt a lump in his throat when he spoke of the Flag. His calling—that of lay-assistant and auxiliary preacher (at a pinch) to a dockyard Mission—perhaps encouraged this surface emotion; but by nature he was one of those who need to make a fuss to feel they are properly patriotic. To his thinking every yacht in the Sound should have dipped her flag to the *Berenice*.

Surely even a salute of guns would not have been

too much. But no: that is the way England dismisses her sons, without so much as a cheer!

He felt ashamed of this cold send-off; ashamed for his countrymen. "What do they know or care?" he asked himself, fastening his scorn on the backs of an unconscious group of country-people who had raced one another uphill from an excursion steamer and halted panting and laughing half-way up the slope. It irritated him the more when he thought of Casey's pale, derisive face. He and Casey had often argued about patriotism; or rather he had done the arguing while Casey sneered. Casey was a stoker, and knew how fuel should be applied.

Casey made no pretence to love England. Gilbart never quite knew why he tolerated him. But so it was: they had met in the reading-room of a Sailors' Home, and had somehow struck up an acquaintance, even a sort of unacknowledged friendship. Their common love of books may have helped; for Casey—Heaven knew where or how—had picked up an education far above Gilbart's, and amazing in a common stoker. Also he wore some baffling, attractive mystery behind his reserve. Once or twice—certainly not half a dozen times—he had at a casual word pulled open for an instant the doors of his heart and given Gilbart a sensation of looking into a furnace, into white-hot depths, sudden and frightening. But what chiefly won him was the knowledge that in some perverse, involuntary and quite inexplicable way he was liked by this sullen fellow, who had no other friend and sought none. He knew the liking to be there as surely as he knew it to be shy and sullen, curt in expression,

contemptuous of itself. Had he ever troubled to examine himself honestly, Gilbart must have acknowledged himself Casey's inferior in all but amiability; and Casey no doubt knew this. But in friendship as in love there is usually one who likes and one who suffers himself to be liked, and the positions are not allotted by merit. Gilbart—a self-deceiver all his life—had accepted the compliment complacently enough.

The *Berenice* cleared the crowd and quickened her speed as the five-minute gun puffed out from the committee-ship and the Blue Peter ran up the halyards in the smoke. Gilbart turned his attention upon the two big yachts and followed their movements until the starting-gun was fired; saw them haul up and plunge over the line so close together that the crews might have shaken hands; watched them as they fluttered out their spinnakers for the run to the eastern mark, for all the world like two great white moths floating side by side swiftly but with no show of hurry. When he returned to the cruiser she was far away, almost off the western end of the breakwater—gone, so far as he was concerned and whoever else might be watching her from the shore; the parting over, the threads torn and snapped, her crew face to face now with the long voyage.

He drew a long breath, and was aware for the first time of a woman standing about twenty yards on his left behind a group of chattering holiday-makers. He saw at a glance that she did not belong to them, but was gazing after the *Berenice*; a forlorn, tearless figure, with a handkerchief crumpled up into a ball in her hand. Affability was a part of

Gilbart's profession, and besides, he hated to see a woman suffer. He edged toward her and lifted his hat.

"I hope," said he, "these persons are not annoying you? They don't understand, of course. I, too, have a friend on the *Berenice*."

The woman looked at him as though she heard but could not for the moment grasp what he said. She tightened her grip on the handkerchief and kept her lips firmly compressed.

Gilbart saw that, though tearless, her eyes wore traces of tears—no redness, but some swelling of the lids, with dark semicircles underneath.

"To them," he went on, nodding toward the holiday-keepers, "it's only regatta day. To them she's only a passing ship helping to make up the pretty scene. They know nothing of the gallant hearts she carries or the sore ones she leaves behind. If they knew, I wonder if they'd care? The ordinary Anglo-Saxon has so little imagination!"

She was staring at him now, and at length seemed to understand. But with understanding there grew in her eyes a look of anger, almost of repugnance.

"Oh, please go away!" she said.

He lifted his hat and obeyed; indeed, he walked off to the farthest end of the Hoe. He was hurt. He had a thin-skinned vanity, and hated to look small even before a stranger. That snub poisoned his morning, and although he looked at the yachts, his mind ran all the time upon the encounter. To be sure he had brought it upon himself, but he preferred to consider that he had meant kindly—had obviously meant kindly. He tried to invent a

retort,—a gentle, dignified retort which would have touched her to a regret for her injustice—nothing more. Perhaps it was not yet too late to return and convey his protest under a delicate apology; or perhaps the mere sight of him, casually passing, might move her to make amends. He even strolled back some way with this idea, but she had disappeared.

The *Berenice* had vanished too; around Penlee Point no doubt. He remembered the field-glasses slung in a case by his hip and was fumbling with the leather strap when a drop of rain fell on his hand, the herald of a smart shower. A dark squall came whistling down the Hamoaze; and standing there in the fringe of it he saw it strike and spread itself out like a fan over the open Sound at his feet, blotting the sparkle out of the water, while some of the small boats heeled to it and others ran up into the wind and lay shaking. It was over in five minutes, and the sun broke out again before the rain ceased falling; but Gilbart decided that there was more to follow. He had not come out to keep holiday, and an unfinished manuscript waited for him in his lodgings—an address on True Manliness, to be delivered two evenings hence in the Mission Room to lads under eighteen. Though he delivered them without manuscript, Gilbart always prepared his addresses carefully and kept the fair copies in his desk. He lived in hope of being reported some day, and then—who could say but a book might be called for?

His lodgings lay midway down a long, dreary street of small houses, each with a small yard at the

back, each built of brick and stuccoed, all as like as peas, all inhabited by dockyardsmen or the families of gunners, artificers, and petty officers in the navy. Prospect Place was its deceptive name, and it ran parallel with three precisely similar thoroughfares—Grafton Place, Alderney Place, and Belvedere Avenue. These four—with a cross-street, where the Mission Room stood facing a pawnbroker's—comprised Gilbart's field of labour.

He reached home a little after twelve, ate his dinner, and fell to work on his manuscript. By half-past three he had finished all but the peroration. Gilbart prided himself on his perorations; and knowing from experience that it helped him to ideas and phrases he caught up his hat and went out for a walk.

During that walk he did indeed catch and fix the needed sentences. But, as it happened, he was never afterward able to recall one of them. All he remembered was that much rain must have fallen; for the pavements which had been dry in the morning were glistening, and the roadways muddy and with standing puddles. On his way homeward each of these puddles reflected the cold, pure light of the dying day, until Prospect Place might have been a street in the New Jerusalem, paved with jasper, beryl, and chrysoprase. So much he remembered, and also that his feet must have taken him back to the Hoe, where the crowd was thicker and the regatta drawing to an end—a few yachts only left to creep home under a greenish sky, out of which the wind was fast dying. He had paused somewhere to listen to a band: he could give no further account to himself.

For this was what had happened: as he entered his lodgings and closed the front door, the letter-box behind it fell open and he saw a sealed envelope lying inside. He picked it out and read the address.

"Mrs. Wilcox!" he called down the passage. "When did this come?"

Mrs. Wilcox, appearing at the kitchen door and wiping her hands, could not tell. The midday post or else the three o'clock. There were no others. Come to think of it, she had heard a postman's knock when she was dishing up the dinner, but had supposed it to be next door. It sounded like next door.

Gilbart took the letter upstairs with him. The address was in Casey's handwriting. "Queer fellow, Casey." He broke the seal in the little bay window. "Just like him, though, to shake hands yesterday without a spark of feeling, and then send his good-byes to reach me after he was well on his way." He drew out the inclosure, unfolded it, and saw that the paper bore the printed address of the Sailors' Home where Casey dossed when ashore, and where writing-paper was supplied gratis. "Couldn't have come ashore after I left him: he'd paid his bill at the Rest and his bag was aboard. Must have had this in his pocket all the time; might just as well have handed it to me—with instructions not to open it—and saved the stamp. What a secretive old chap it is!"

He held the letter close to his eyes in the waning daylight.

"DEAR JOHN,—By the time this reaches you we shall have started; and by then, or a little later, I

shall have gone and the *Berenice* with me. If you ask where, I don't know; but it is where we shall never meet.

"You serve your country in your own way. I am going to serve mine. Perhaps I shall also be serving yours; for it is only by striking terribly and without warning that the brave men in this world can get even with the cowards who make its laws.

"One thing I envy you—you'll be alive to see the rage of the sheep. I am playing this hand alone and without help. So when your silly newspapers begin to cry out about secret societies, *you will know.* I never belonged to one in my life.

"I think I am sorriest about the way you'll think of me. But that makes no real difference, because I know it to be foolish. I have the stuff on board and the little machine. I cannot fix the time to an hour up or down; but you may take it for sure that *some time between* 10 *p.m. and midnight the* Berenice *will be at the bottom of the sea* with

"Yours, P. C."

While John Gilbart read this there was silence in the stuffy little room, and for some minutes after. Then he stepped to the mantelpiece for the matchbox and candle. A small ormolu clock ticked there, and while he groped for the matches he put out a hand to stop the noise, which had suddenly grown intolerable. He desisted, remembering that he did not know how the clock worked—that Mrs. Wilcox, who wound it up religiously on Monday mornings, was proud of it, and—anyway, *that* wasn't the

machine he wanted to stop. He found a match, lit it and held it close to the letter.

The match burned low, scorched his fingers. He dropped it in the fender, where it flickered out, just missing the "waterfall" of shavings with which Mrs. Wilcox decorated her fireplace in the summer months. He did not light another, but went back to the window and stood there, quite still.

Down the street to the westward, over the wet roofs still glimmering in the twilight, one pale green rift divided the heavy clouds, and in that rift the last of the daylight was dying. Across the way, in the house facing him, a woman was lighting a lamp. As a rule the inhabitants of Prospect Place did not draw the blinds of their upper rooms until they closed the shutters also and went to bed: and Gilbart looked straight into the little parlour. But he saw nothing.

He was trying—vainly trying—to bring his mind to it. Nothing really big had happened to him before: and his first feeling, characteristically selfish, was that this terrible thing had risen up to alter all the rest of his life. He must disentangle himself, get away to a distance and have a look at it. His brain was buzzing. Yes, there it rose, like a black wall between this moment and all the hours to come; a brute barrier stretching clean across the prospect. Again and again he brought his mind up to it as you might coax a horse up to a fence; again and again it refused. Each time in the last few steps his heart froze, extending its chill until every separate faculty hung back springless and inert. And there was no getting round!

Why had this happened to *him* of all people? It never for a moment occurred to him to doubt Casey's word. He saw it now; hideous as the deed was, Casey was capable of it—had always been capable of it. Let it go for a miserable tribute to Casey's honesty in the past that Gilbart accepted the infernal statement at once and without suspicion. He knew now that from the bottom of their intercourse this candid devil had been grinning up at him all the time; only his own cowardly, comfortable habit of seeing the world as he wished it had kept his eyes turned from the truth. Men don't as a rule commit crimes; not one man in millions translates himself into a crime of this sort; the odds against his daring it are only to be told in millions. Yet it had happened. Man or devil, Casey never paltered with his creed; if the world differed from him, then it was Casey against the world; a hopeless business for him, yet he would get in a blow if possible. And Casey had got in his blow. The incredible had happened; but (Gilbart groaned) why had it happened to *him?* In his stupefaction he returned again and again upon this, catching in the flood at that one little straw of self; not inhumanly, as callous to the ruin of others; but pitifully, meanly, because it was the one thing familiar in the roar and din. He cursed Casey; cursed him for betraying his friendship. The man had no right— He pulled up suddenly, with a laugh. After all, Casey had played the game, had faced the music, and would go down with the *Berenice.* One soul against three hundred and fifty, perhaps; not what you would call atonement; but, after all, the best he had to offer.

Wonder how many Samson pulled down with him at Gaza? Wonder if the Bible says?

"Beg pardon, Mr. Gilbart?"

It was Mrs. Wilcox standing in the doorway with his tea on a tray.

"It—it was nothing," he stammered. She must have heard his laugh.

"Talking to yourself? I often hear you at it over your sermons and things; sometimes at your dressing, too; I hears you when I'm in here doing up the room. You'd like the lamp lit, I suppose?" She set down the tray.

"Not just yet."

"Well, it's a bad habit, reading with your meals."

"It's not worth while to bring a lamp. I must drink my tea in a hurry, and run out. I have an engagement."

He heard her go out and close the door. "Casey had no right. It was a betrayal. If the man were bent on this infernal crime—put the atrocity of it aside for a moment—call it just an ordinary crime; . . . but why need he have written that letter? Why involve *him*? Well, not involve, perhaps; still there was a kind of responsibility——"

His eyes had been fastened on the little parlour across the road. The woman after lighting the lamp had set it in the centre of a round table and left the room. Between this table and the hearth an old man sat in an arm-chair, smoking his pipe and reading a newspaper. The back of the chair was turned toward the window, but over it Gilbart could see the crown of a grey head and small, steady puffs of smoke ascending between it and the upper edge

of the paper. A light appeared in the room above; the light of a candle behind the drawn blind. It lasted there perhaps for ten minutes, and once the woman's shadow moved across the blind.

The light went out, and after a minute or two the woman reappeared in the parlour. She carried a work-basket, and after speaking a word with the old man in the chair she set the basket down on the table, drew up a chair and began to darn a child's stocking. Now and then she looked up as if listening for some sound or movement in the room overhead, but after a moment or two began to ply her needle again. The needle moved more slowly—stopped—she bowed her head over the stocking. Gilbart knew why. She was the wife of a petty officer on the *Berenice*. The old man in the chair went on reading.

All this while a light had been growing in Gilbart's brain, and now he saw. In this street, and the next, and the next, lived scores who had sons, husbands, brothers on board the *Berenice*; thin walls of brick and plaster dividing to-night their sore hearts and their prayers; a whole town with its hopes and its happy days given into keeping of one ship; not its love only but its trust for life's smallest comforts following her as she moved away through the darkness. And he alone knew! He had only to throw open the window—to fling four words into that silent street—to shout, "The *Berenice* is lost!"—and with the breath of it windows would fly open, partitions fall down, and all those privacies meet and answer in one terrible outcry. He put up a hand to thrust it away—this awful gift of power. He would

have none of it; he was unfit. "Oh, my God!"—it was he, not Casey, who held the real infernal machine. It was here, not in the *Berenice*, that the levin must fall; and he, John Gilbart, held it in his fingers. "Oh, my God, I am unfit—thrust not this upon me!"

But there was no escape. He must take his hat and run—run to the Port Admiral. The errand was useless, he knew; for all the while at the back of his soul's confusion some practical corners of his brain had been working at the problem of time—was there time to follow and prevent? There was not. He knew the *Berenice's* natural speed to be eighteen knots. Put it at sixteen, fifteen even; still not the fastest destroyer in the port—following in a bee-line—could overtake her by midnight. And there might be, must be, delays. Yet God, too, might interfere; some providential accident might delay the cruise. *He* must run, at anyrate. He picked up his hat and ran.

Now that he was taking action—doing something—the worst horror of responsibility left him for a while; he seemed to have cast some of it already off his own shoulders and on to the Admiral's. As he ran he found time to think of Casey. Casey was doing this thing—not in hatred or in villainy for gain—but because it seemed to him right—right, or at least necessary. Casey was laying down his own life in the deed. How could man, framed in God's image, expect ultimate good out of devilish cruelty? Yet from the world's beginning men had murdered and tortured each other on this only plea; had butchered women and the very babes; had stamped

upon God's image and—marvel of marvels—for its soul's salvation, not for their own advantage. At every stride Gilbart felt his moral footing, trusted for years without question, cracking and crumbling and swirling away in blocks. Red flames leapt into the fissures and filled them. The end of the world had surely come; but—he must run to the Admiral! He kept that uppermost in his mind, and ran.

The windows of the Admiralty House blazed with light. The Admiral's wife was giving a dinner and a dance, and already a small crowd had gathered to see the earlier guests arrive. The sight dashed Gilbart. Suddenly he remembered that the letter had reached him by the afternoon post. It was now half-past seven, and he would have to explain the interval; for of course the Admiral would suspect the whole story at first. Gilbart knew the official manner; he had been privileged to study the fine flower of it in this particular Admiral one afternoon six months before, when the great man had condescended to sit on the platform at the Mission anniversary. "Tut, tut—a stupid practical joke"—that would be the beginning; and then would follow cross-examination in the coldest court-martial fashion. Well, he could explain; but it would be just as well to have the story pat beforehand.

One minute—ten minutes went by. Cabs rattled up and private carriages; officers in glittering uniforms, ladies muffled in silk and swansdown stepped past the policeman behind whom Gilbart hesitated. This would never do; better he had gone in with the story hot on his lips. He twitched the policeman's elbow.

"May I pass, please? I want to see the Admiral."

"That's likely, ain't it?"

"But I have a message for him; an urgent one—one that won't keep a moment!"

"Why, I have seen you hanging round here this quarter hour with these very eyes! 'Won't keep'? Here, you get out!"

"I tell you——"

"Oh, deliver us!" the policeman interrupted. "What's the matter with you? Come to keep the Admiral's dinner cold while you hand over command of the Channel Fleet?" He winked heavily at one or two of the nearest in the crowd, and they laughed.

Gilbart eyed them savagely. He had a word in his mouth which would stop their laughing; and for one irrational moment he was near speaking it, near launching against half a dozen loafers the bolt which only to hold and handle had aged him ten years in an hour. The word was even on his tongue when a carriage passed and at its open window a young girl leaned forward and looked out on the crowd. Her face in the light of the entrance-lamp was exquisitely fair, delicately rose and white as the curved inner lip of a sea-shell. At her throat, where her cloak-collar fell back a little, showing its quilted lining of pale blue satin, a diamond necklace shimmered, and a rosebud of diamonds in her hair sparkled so that it seemed to dance. It caught Gilbart's eye, and somehow it seemed to lift and remove her and the house she was entering—the lit windows, the guests, the Admiral himself—into another world. If it were real, then (like enough)

this fragile thing, this Dresden goddess, owned a brother, perhaps a lover, on board the *Berenice*. If so, here was another world waiting to be shattered—a world of silks and toys and pretty uniforms and tiny bric-à-brac—a sort of doll's house inhabited by angels at play. But could it be real? Could such a world exist and be liable as his own to *It*? Could the same brutal touch destroy this fabric and the sordid privacies of Prospect Place—all in a run like a row of card-houses?

"Never you mind *'im*, Mister Gilbart," said a voice at his elbow, and he turned and looked in the face of a girl who, in an interval of dressmaking, had once helped him with his district work.

"Him?"

"The peeler," Milly Sanders nodded; and it flashed on Gilbart that the policeman's joke, the carriage, the girl's face and these thoughts of his had all gone by in something less than ten seconds. "He've got the 'ump to-night, that's what's the matter with 'im." And Milly Sanders nodded again reassuringly.

"What are you doing here?" Gilbart asked.

"Me? Oh, it's in the way of business, as you might say. I comes here to pick up 'ints. I s'pose now you thought 'twasn't very feelin'-'earted, and my Dick gone away foreign only this mornin'?"

He remembered now that the girl's zeal for Mission work had cooled ever since she had been walking-out with her Dick—a young stoker in the *Berenice*.

"I reckon that's the last of the dinner-guests. The others won't be comin' much before ten. Well,

I'm off to the 'Oe; there's going to be fireworks, and that's the best place for seein'."

"In the way of business, too, I suppose?" said Gilbart, and wondered how he could say it.

Milly giggled. "You 'ad me there," she confessed. "But what's the good to give way? I'm sure"—with conviction—"it's just what Dick would like me to do. I'm going, anyway. So long!" She paused: "that is—unless you'd like to come along, too?"

It was, after all, astonishingly easy. Even if he found and convinced the Admiral, nothing could be done. Why then should he hasten all this misery? Was it not, rather, an act of large mercy to hold back the news? Say that by holding his tongue he delayed it by twenty-four hours; life after all was made up of days and not so very many of them. By silence then—it stood to reason—he gained from woe a clear day for hundreds. Meanwhile here stood one of those hundreds. Might he not give her, under the very shadow of fate, an hour or two of actual, positive happiness? He told himself this, knowing all the while that he lied. He knew that the thing was easier to put off than to do. He knew that he took Milly's arm in his not to comfort her (although he meant to do this, too) but to drug his own conscience, and because he was mad—yes, mad—for human company and support. For hours—it seemed for weeks—he had been isolated, alone with that secret and his own soul. He could bear it no longer; he must ease the torment—only for a little—then perhaps he would go back to the Admiral. Chatter was what he wanted, the sound of a fellow-creature's voice, babbling no matter what.

He knew also that he bought this respite at a price, and the price must be paid terribly when he came to wake. And yet he found it astonishingly easy to take Milly's arm.

"But I say," she rattled on, "you must be soft!"

"Why?" He was drinking in the sound of her words, letting the sense run by him.

"Why, to suppose the Admiral would see you at this time. What was it about?"

"Please go on talking."

"Well, I am. What did you want to see the Admiral for? Some Mission business, I s'pose. . . . Oh, you needn't tell if you don't choose; I'm not dying to hear."

They stood side by side on the Hoe, watching the fireworks. Three or four searchlights were playing over the Sound, turned now upon the anchored craft, now upward, following the rockets, and again downward, crisscrossing their white rays as if to catch the dropping multi-coloured stars. "O–o–oh!" exclaimed Milly, as each shower of rockets exploded. "But what makes you jump like that?"

"I say," he asked after a time, "since we've come to enjoy ourselves why not do the thing thoroughly? What do you say to the theatre after this?"

"The theatre! Well, you are gettin' on! That would be 'eavenly. They've got the 'Charity Girl' on this week—Gertie Lennox dancing. But don't you disapprove of that sort of thing?"

"So I—I mean I don't make a practice of it. But perhaps—once in a way——"

"I love it; though 'tisn't often I gets the chance. I dunno what Dick would say, though."

She said it archly, meaning to suggest that Dick might be jealous. John Gilbart misunderstood.

"But that's foolish. Why not to-night as well as any other night? What difference can it make to —to——" He broke off, laughing a little wildly. "We'll go and give each other moral support. We'll take tickets for the pit—no, the dress circle!"

"The dress circle!" There was awe in Milly's voice; her hand went up to her head. "They make you take your 'at off there. Oh, I couldn't!" But he caught her by the arm and hurried her off almost at a run—the girl giggling and panting and beginning to enjoy herself amazingly.

The performance had begun; but they found seats in the front row of the dress circle, almost before she had ceased panting, and Milly was unpinning her hat and glancing up at the gallery on the chance of an envious friendly recognition. The lights, the colours, the clash of brass in the orchestra made Gilbart's head spin. A stout *tenore robusto* in the uniform of a naval lieutenant was parading the stage in halos of mauve and green lime-light, and bawling his own praises to a semicircle of females. Gilbart's ear caught and retained but a line or two of their shrill chorus:

> Through the world so wide
> He's old England's pride,
> But we'er glad now he's come back:
> For he's dressed in blue,
> And he's always true—
> Heaven bless you, dear old Jack!

The sentiments of this ditty did not materially differ from those which Gilbart was in the habit of

assimilating from his morning newspaper; nor were they much more fatuously expressed. Twenty-four hours ago he might even have applauded them as noisily as anyone in the enraptured house. Now his gorge rose against the song, the complacent singer, the men and women who could be amused by such things. Could this be what they called the joy of living? Milly's eyes had begun to sparkle. He forgot that in this very contempt the theatre was providing what he had come to seek—a drug for conscience. And before he recognised this the drug was weakening. Horribly, stealthily, *It* began to reassert itself. These people—what would happen if he stood up in his place and shouted *It?* His mind played with the temptation; he saw white faces, men standing and looking up at him, the performance on the stage arrested, the orchestra mute; almost he heard his voice ring out over the sudden frozen consternation. No; he gripped the velvet cushion before him. "I must sit it out. I will sit it out."

And he did, though he suffered horribly. Milly found him a desperately dull companion, but luckily her neighbours' dresses and ornaments diverted her between the acts. She would have liked an orange; but it appeared that oranges were not eaten in the dress circle.

Outside the theatre door in the great portico Gilbart flung up both hands and let out a long, shuddering sigh.

"My! What's the matter with you?" asked Milly.

"Come along and have some supper."

He led her to a supper-room. "Well, you do know how to do things," she said. But it frightened her when he ordered champagne. She looked at him nervously. "I've never tasted it," she confessed; "and"—with a glance around the room—"and I don't think I like it."

She drank her glassful, however, while he finished the pint bottle. Then she picked up her worn gloves.

"Must we be going?" The end had come and worse torment must begin.

"Of course we must; and 'igh time too, if you knew what mother 'll say when I get home. You mustn't think I 'aven't enjoyed myself, though," she added, "because I 'ave."

Out in the street as they walked arm in arm she unbent still further. "I shall tell mother, of course. She won't mind when she knows it's you, because you're so respectable. But girls 'ave to be careful."

At her door she paused before saying good-night. She loved Dick, of course; but she wondered a little what Mr. Gilbart meant. His manner had been so queer when he said, "Must we be going?"

For a moment she waited, half expecting him to say something, meaning to be angry if he said it. Such was her crude idea of coquettishness. But John Gilbart merely shook hands, waited until the door closed behind her, and bent his steps toward home.

That was in the next street. He walked briskly up to the door—then turned on his heel and strode away rapidly. He could not go upstairs; could not face the silent hours alone. As he retreated

the front door was opened. Mrs. Wilcox had been sitting up for him, and had heard and recognised his footstep. He ran. After a minute the door was closed again.

. . . . . .

At nine o'clock next morning a sentry on the seaward side of Tregantle Fort saw a man sitting below in the sunshine on the edge of the cliff, and took him for a tramp. It was John Gilbart. He had spent the night trudging the streets, but always returning to the pavement in front of one or the other of the two important newspaper offices. Lights shone in the upper windows of each, but all was quiet; and he saw the men leave one by one and walk away into darkness with brisk but regular footfall. A little before dawn he had caught the newspaper-train for the west, left it at the first station over the Cornish border and set his face toward the sea. His walk took him past dewy hedgerows over which the larks sang. But he neither saw nor heard. A deep peace had fallen upon him. He knew himself now; had touched the bottom of his cowardice, his falsity. He would never be happy again, but he could never deceive himself again; no, not though God interfered.

He looked out on the sunshine with purged eyes. Now and then he listened, as if for some sound from the horizon or the great town behind him.

Had God interfered? How still the world was!

THE CELLARS OF RUEDA

I

I ENTER THE CELLARS

IT happened on a broiling afternoon in July 1812, and midway in a fortnight of exquisite weather, during which Wellington and Marmont faced each other across the Douro before opening the beautiful series of evolutions—or, rather, of circumvolutions—which ended suddenly on the 22nd, and locked the two armies in the prettiest pitched battle I have lived to see.

For the moment neither General desired a battle. Marmont, thrust back from Salamanca, had found a strong position where he could safely wait for reinforcements, and had indeed already collected near upon forty thousand of all arms, when, on the 8th, Bonnet marched into camp from Asturias with another six thousand infantry. He had sent, too, to borrow some divisions from Caffarelli's Army of the North. But these he expected in vain: for Bonnet's withdrawal from Asturias had laid bare the whole line of French communication, and so frightened Caffarelli for the safety of his own districts that he at once recalled the twelve thousand

men he was moving down to the Douro, and in the end sent but a handful of cavalry, and that grudgingly.

All this I had the honour to predict to Lord Wellington just twelve hours before Bonnet's arrival on the scene. I staked my reputation that Caffarelli (on whom I had been watching and waiting for a month past) would not move. And Lord Wellington on the spot granted me the few days' rest I deserved —not so much in joy of the news (which, nevertheless, was gratifying) as because for the moment he had no work for me. The knot was tied. He could not attack except at great disadvantage, for the fords were deep, and Marmont held the one bridge at Tordesillas. His business was to hold on, covering Salamanca and the road back to Portugal, and await Marmont's first move.

The French front stretched as a chord across an arc of the river, which here takes a long sweep to the south; and the British faced it around this arc, with their left, centre, and right, upon three tributary streams—the Guarena, Trabancos, and Zapardiel—over which last, and just before it joins the Douro, towers the rock of Rueda, crowned with a ruinated castle.

Upon this rock—for my quarters lay in face of it, on the opposite bank of the stream—I had been gazing for the best part of an idle afternoon. I was comfortable; my *cigarritos* lay within reach; my tent gave shade enough; and through the flapway I found myself watching a mighty pretty comedy, with the rock of Rueda for its back-scene.

A more satisfactory one I could not have wished,

and I have something of a connoisseur's eye. To be sure, the triangular flapway narrowed the picture, and although the upstanding rock and castle fell admirably within the frame, it cut off an animated scene on the left, where their distant shouts and laughter told me that French and British were bathing together in the river below and rallying each other on the battles yet to be fought. For during these weeks, and indeed through the operations which followed up to the moment of fighting, the armies behaved less like foes than like two teams before a cricket-match, or two wrestlers who shake hands and afterwards grin amicably as they move in circles seeking for a hitch. As I lay, however, the bathing-place could only be brought into view by craning my neck beyond the tent-door: and my posture was too well chosen to be shifted. Moreover, I had a more singular example of these amenities in face of me, on the rock of Rueda itself.

The cliff, standing out against the sun's glare like ivory beneath the blue, and quivering with heat, was flecked here and there with small lilac shadows; and these shadows marked the entrances of the caves with which Rueda was honeycombed. I had once or twice resolved to visit these caves; for I had heard much of their renown, and even (although this I disbelieved) that they contained wine enough to intoxicate all the troops in the Peninsula. Wine in abundance they certainly contained, and all the afternoon men singly and in clusters had been swarming in and out of these entrances like flies about a honeypot. For whatever might be happen-

ing on the Trabancos under Lord Wellington's eye, here at Rueda, on the extreme right, discipline for the while had disappeared: and presumably the like was true of Marmont's extreme left holding the bridge of Tordesillas. For from the bridge a short roadway leads to Rueda; and among the figures moving about the rock, diminished by distance though they were, I counted quite a respectable proportion of Frenchmen. No one who loves his calling ever quite forgets it: and though no one could well have appeared (or indeed felt) lazier, I was really giving my eye practice in discriminating, on this ant-hill, the drunk from the sober, and even the moderately drunk from the incapable.

There could be no doubt, at any rate, concerning one little Frenchman whom two tall British grenadiers were guiding down the cliff towards the road. And against my will I had to drop my cigarette and laugh aloud: for the two guides were themselves unsteady, yet as desperately intent upon the job as though they handled a chest of treasure. Now they would prop him up and run him over a few yards of easy ground: anon, at a sharp descent, one would clamber down ahead and catch the burden his comrade lowered by the collar, with a subsidiary grip upon belt or pantaloons. But to the Frenchman all smooth and rugged came alike: his legs sprawled impartially: and once, having floundered on top of the leading Samaritan with a shock which rolled the pair to the very verge of a precipice, he recovered himself, and sat up in an attitude which, at half a mile's distance, was eloquent of tipsy reproach. In short, when the procession had filed past the edge of

my tent-flap, I crawled out to watch: and then it occurred to me as worth a lazy man's while to cross the Zapardiel by the pontoon bridge below and head these comedians off upon the highroad. They promised to repay a closer view.

So I did; gained the road, and, seating myself beside it, hailed them as they came.

"My friend," said I to the leading grenadier, "you are taking a deal of trouble with your prisoner."

The grenadier stared at his comrade, and his comrade at him. As if by signal they mopped their brows with their coat-sleeves. The Frenchman sat down on the road without more ado.

"Prisoner?" mumbled the first grenadier.

"Ay," said I. "Who is he? He doesn't look like a general of brigade."

"Devil take me if *I* know. Who will he be, Bill?"

Bill stared at the Frenchman blankly, and rooted him out of the dust with his toe. "I wonder, now! 'Picked him up, somewheres—Get up, you little pig, and carry your liquor like a gentleman. It was Mike intojuced him."

"I did not," said Mike.

"Very well, then, ye did not. I must have come by him some other way."

"It was yourself tripped over him in the cellar, up yandhar." He broke off and eyed me, meditating a sudden thought. "It seems mighty queer, that—speaking of a cellar as 'up yandhar.' Now a cellar, by rights, should be in the ground, under your fut."

"And so it is," argued Bill; "slap in the bowels of it."

"Ah, be quiet wid your bowels! As I was saying, sor, Bill tripped over the little fellow: and the next I knew he was crying to be tuk home to camp, and Bill swearing to do it if it cost him his stripes. And that is where I come into this fatigue job: for the man's no friend of mine, and will not be looking it, I hope."

"Did I so?" Bill exclaimed, regarding himself suddenly from outside, as it were, and not without admiration. "Did I promise that? Well, then"—he fixed a sternly disapproving stare on the Frenchman—"the Lord knows what possessed me; but to the bridgehead you go, if I fight the whole of Clausel's division single-handed. Take his feet, Mike; I'm a man of my word. Hep!—ready is it? For'ard!"

For a minute or so, as they staggered down the road, I stared after them; and then upon an impulse mounted the track by which they had descended.

It was easy enough, or they had never come down alive; but the sun's rays smote hotly off the face of the rock, and at one point I narrowly missed being brained by a stone dislodged by some drunkard above me. Already, however, the stream of tipplers had begun to set back towards the camp, and my main difficulty was to steer against it, avoiding disputes as to the rule of the road. I had no intention of climbing to the castle: my whim was—and herein again I set my training a test—to walk straight to the particular opening from which, across the Zapardiel, I had seen my comedians emerge.

I found it, not without difficulty—a broad archway of rock, so low that a man of ordinary stature must

stoop to pass beneath it; with, for threshold, a sill of dry fine earth which sloped up to a ridge immediately beneath the archway, and on the inner side dipped down into darkness so abruptly that as I mounted on the outer side I found myself staring, at a distance of two yards or less, into the face of an old man seated within the cave, out of which his head and shoulders arose into view as if by magic.

"Ah!" said he calmly. "Good evening, señor. You will find good entertainment within." He pointed past him into absolute night, or so it seemed to my dazzled eyes.

He spoke in Spanish, which is my native tongue —although not my ancestral one. And as I crouched to pass the archway I found time to speculate on his business in this cavern. For clearly he had not come hither to drink, and as clearly he had nothing to do with either army. At first glance I took him for a priest; but his bands, if he wore them, were hidden beneath a dark poncho fitting tightly about his throat, and his bald head baffled any search for a tonsure. Although a small book lay open on his lap, I had interrupted no reading; for when I came upon him his spectacles were perched high over his brows and gleamed upon me like a duplicate pair of eyes. He was patently sober, too, which perhaps came as the greatest shock of all to me, after meeting so many on my path who were patently the reverse.

I answered his salutation. "But you will pardon me, excellent sir, for saying that you perhaps mistake the entertainment I seek. We gentlemen of Spain are temperate livers, and I will confess that curiosity

alone has brought me—or say, rather, the fame of your wonderful cellars of Rueda."

I put it thus, thinking he might perhaps be some official of the caves or of the castle above. But he let the shot pass. His lean hands from the first had been fumbling with his poncho, to throw back the folds of it in courtesy to a stranger; but this seemed no easy matter, and at a sign from me he desisted.

"I can promise you," he answered, "nothing more amusing than the group with which you paused to converse just now by the road."

"Eh? You saw me?"

"I was watching from the path outside; for I too can enjoy a timely laugh."

No one, I am bound to say, would have guessed it. With his long scrag neck and great moons of spectacles, which he had now drawn down, the better to study me, he suggested an absurd combination of the vulture and the owl.

"*Dios!* You have good eyes, then."

"For long distances. But they cannot see Salamanca." His gaze wandered for a moment to the entrance beyond which, far below and away, a sunny landscape twinkled, and he sighed. But before I could read any meaning in the words or the sigh, his spectacles were turned upon me again. "You are Spanish?" he asked abruptly.

"Of Castile, for that matter; though not, I may own to you, of pure descent. I come from Aranjuez, where a Scottish ancestor, whose name I bear, settled and married soon after the War of Succession."

"A Scot?" He leaned forward, and his hands,

which had been resting on his lap, clutched the book nervously. "Of the Highlands?"

I nodded, wondering at his agitation.

"Even so, señor."

"They say that all Scotsmen in Spain know one another. Tell me, my son"—he was a priest, then, after all—"tell me, for the love of God, if you know where to find a certain Manuel McNeill, who, I hear, is a famous scout."

"That, reverend father, is not always easy, as the French would tell you; but for me, here, it happens to be very easy indeed, seeing that I am the unworthy sinner you condescend to compliment."

"You?" He drew back, incredulous. "You?" he repeated, thrusting the book into his pocket and groping on the rocky soil beside him. "The finger of God, then, is in this. What have I done with my candle? Ah, here it is. Oblige me by holding it —so—while I strike a light." I heard the rattle of a tinder-box. "They sell these candles"—here he caught a spark and blew—"they sell these candles at the castle above. The quality is indifferent and the price excessive; but I wander at night and pick up those which the soldiers drop—an astonishing number, I can assure you. See, it is lit!" He stretched out a hand and took the candle from me. "Be careful of your footsteps, for the floor is rough."

"But, pardon me; before I follow, I have a right to know upon what business."

He turned and peered at me, holding the candle high. "You are suspicious," he said, almost querulously.

"It goes with my trade."

"I take you to one who will be joyful to see you. Will that suffice, my son?"

"Your description, reverend father, would include many persons—from the Duke of Ragusa downwards—whom, nevertheless, I have no desire to meet."

"Well, I will tell you, though I was planning it for a happy surprise. This person is a kinsman of yours—a Captain Alan McNeill."

I stepped back a pace and eyed him. "Then," said I, "your story will certainly not suffice; for I know it to be impossible. It was only last April that I took leave of Captain Alan McNeill on the road to Bayonne and close to the frontier. He was then a prisoner under escort, with a letter from Marmont ordering the Governor of Bayonne to clap him in irons and forward him to Paris, where (the Marshal hinted) no harm would be done by shooting him."

"Then he must have escaped."

"Pardon me, that again is impossible; for I should add that he was under some kind of parole."

"A prisoner under escort, in irons—condemned, or at least intended, to be shot—and all the while under parole! My friend, that must surely have been a strange kind of parole!"

"It was, and, saving your reverence, a cursed dirty kind. But it sufficed for my kinsman, as I know to my cost. For with the help of the *partidas* I rescued him, close to the frontier; and he—like the fool, or like the noble gentleman he was—declined his salvation, released the escort (which we

had overpowered), shook hands with us, and rode forward to his death."

"A brave story."

"You would say so, did you know the whole of it. There is no man alive whose hand I could grasp as proudly as I grasped his at the last: and no other, alive or dead, of whom I could say, with the same conviction, that he made me at once think worse of myself and better of human nature."

"He seems, then, to have a mania for improving his fellow-men; for," said my guide, still pausing with the candle aloft and twinkling on his spectacles, "I assure you he has been trying to make a Lutheran of *me*!"

Wholly incredulous as I was, this took me fairly between wind and water. "Did he," I stammered, "did he happen to mention the Scarlet Woman?"

"Several times: though (in justice to his delicacy, I must say it) only in his delirium."

"His delirium?"

"He has been ill; almost desperately ill. A case of sunstroke, I believe. Do I understand that you believe sufficiently to follow me?"

"I cannot say that I believe. Yet if it be not Captain Alan McNeill, and if for some purpose which—to be frank with you—I cannot guess, I am being walked into a trap, you may take credit to yourself that it has been well, nay excellently, invented. I pay you that compliment beforehand, and for my kinsman's sake, or for the sake of his memory, I accept the risk."

"There is no risk," answered the reverend father,

at once leading the way: "none, that is to say, with me to guide you."

"There is risk, then, in some degree?"

"We skirt a labyrinth," he answered quietly. "You will have observed, of course, that no one has passed us or disturbed our talk. To be sure, the archway under which you found me is one of the 'false entrances,' as they are called, of Rueda cellars. There are a dozen between this and the summit, and perhaps half a dozen below, which give easy access to the wine-vaults, and in any of which a crowd of goers and comers would have incommoded us. For the soldiers would seem—and very wisely, I must allow—to follow a chart and confine themselves to the easier outskirts of these caves. Wisely, because the few cellars they visit contain Val de Peñas enough to keep two armies drunk until either Wellington enters Madrid or Marmont recaptures Salamanca. But they are not adventurous: and the few who dare, though no doubt they penetrate to better wine, are not in the end to be envied. . . . Now this passage of ours is popularly, but quite erroneously, supposed to lead nowhere, and is therefore by consent avoided."

"Excuse me," said I, "but it was precisely by this exit that I saw emerge three men as honestly drunk as any three I have met in my life."

For the moment he seemed to pay no heed, but stooped and held the candle low before his feet.

"The path, you perceive, here shelves downwards. By following it we should find ourselves, after ten minutes or so, at the end of a *cul de sac*. But see this narrow ledge to the right—pay particular heed

to your footsteps here, I pray you: it curves to the right, broadening ever so little before it disappears around the corner: yet here lies the true path, and you shall presently own it an excellent one." He sprang forward like a goat, and turning, again held the candle low that I might plant my feet wisely. Sure enough, just around the corner the ledge widened at once, and we passed into a new gallery.

"Ah, you were talking of those three drunkards? Well, they must have emerged by following this very path."

"Impossible."

"Excuse me, but for a scout whose fame is acknowledged, you seem fond of a word which Bonaparte (we are told) has banished from the dictionaries. Ask yourself, now. They were assuredly drunk, and your own eyes have assured you there is no wine between us and daylight. My son, I have inhabited Rueda long enough to acquire a faith in miracles, even had I brought none with me. Along this ledge our three drunkards strolled like children out of the very womb of earth. They will never know what they escaped: should the knowledge ever come to them it ought to turn their hair grey then and there."

"Children and drunkards," said I. "You know the byword?"

"And might believe it—but for much evidence on the other side."

But I was following another thought, and for the moment did not hear him closely. "I suppose, then, the owners guard the main entrances, but

leave such as this, for instance, to be defended by their own difficulty?"

"Why should any be guarded?" he asked, pausing to untie a second candle from the bunch he had suspended from his belt.

"Eh? Surely to leave all this wine exposed in a world of thieves——"

The reverend father smiled as he lit the new candle from the stump of his old one. "No doubt the wine-growers did not contemplate a visit from two armies, and such very thirsty ones. The peasants hereabouts are abstemious, and the few thieves count for no more than flies. For the rest——"

He was stooping again, with his candle all but level with the ledge and a few inches wide of it. Held so, it cast a feeble ray into the black void below us: and down there—thirty feet down perhaps — as his talk broke in two like a snapped guitar-string, my eyes caught a blur of scarlet.

"For God's sake," I cried, "hold the light steady!"

"To what purpose?" he asked grimly. "That is one whom Providence did not lead out to light. See, he is broken to pieces—you can tell from the way he lies; and dead, too. My son, the caves of Rueda protect themselves."

He shuffled to the end of the ledge, and there, at the entrance of a dark gallery, so low that our heads almost knocked against the rock-roof, he halted again and leaned his ear against the wall on the right.

"Sometimes where the wall is thin I have heard them crying and beating on it with their fists."

I shivered. The reader knows me by this time for a man of fair courage: but the bravest man on earth may be caught off his own ground, and I do not mind confessing that here was a situation for which a stout parentage and a pretty severe training had somehow failed to provide. In short, as my guide pushed forward, I followed in knock-knee'd terror. I wanted to run. I told myself that if this indeed were a trap, and he should turn and rush upon me, I was as a child at his mercy. And he might do worse: he might blow out the light and disappear. As the gallery narrowed and at the same time contracted in height, so that at length we were crawling on hands and knees, this insanity grew. Two or three times I felt for my knife, with an impulse to drive it through his back, seize the candles and escape: nor at this moment can I say what restrained me.

At length, and after crawling for at least two hundred yards, without any warning he stood erect: and this was the worst moment of all. For as he did so the light vanished—or so nearly as to leave but the feeblest glimmer, the reason being (and I discovered it with a sob) that he stood in an ample vaulted chamber while I was yet beneath the roof of the tunnel. The first thing I saw on emerging beside him was the belly of a great wine-tun curving out above my head, its recurve hidden, lost somewhere in upper darkness: and the first thing I heard was the whip of a bat's wing by the candle. My guide beat it off.

"Better take a candle and light it from mine.

These creatures breed here in thousands—hear them now above us!"

"But what is that other sound?" I asked, and together we moved towards it.

Three enormous tuns stood in the chamber, and we halted by the base of the farthest, where, with a spilt pail beside him, lay a British sergeant of the 36th Regiment tranquilly snoring! That and no other was the sound, and a blesseder I never heard. I could have kicked the fellow awake for the mere pleasure of shaking hands with him.

My guide moved on.

"But we are not going to leave him here!"

"Oh, as for that, his sleep is good for hours to come. If you choose, we can pick him up on our return."

So we left him, and now I went forward with a heart strangely comforted, although on leaving the great cellar I knew myself hopelessly lost. Hitherto I might have turned, and, fortune aiding, have found daylight: but beyond the cellar the galleries ramified by the score, and we walked so rapidly and chose between them with such apparent lack of method that I lost count. My one consolation was the memory of a burly figure in scarlet supine beneath a wine-tun.

I was thinking of him when, at the end of a passage to me indistinguishable from any of the dozen or so we had already followed, my guide put out a hand, and, drawing aside a goatskin curtain, revealed a small chamber with a lamp hanging from the roof, and under the lamp a bed of straw, and upon the bed an emaciated man, propped and holding a book.

His eyes were on the entrance; for he had heard our footsteps. And almost we broke into one cry of joy. It was indeed my kinsman, Captain McNeill!

II

CAPTAIN McNEILL'S ADVENTURES

"But how on earth came you here?" was the unspoken question in the eyes of both of us; and, each reading the reflection of his own, we both broke out together into a laugh — though my kinsman's was all but inaudible—and after it he lay back on his pillow (an old knapsack) and panted.

"My story must needs be the shorter," said I; "so let us have it over and get it out of the way. I come from watching Caffarelli in the north, and for the last four days have been taking a holiday and twiddling my fingers in camp here, just across the Zapardiel. Happening this afternoon to stroll to this amazing rock, I fell in with the reverend father here, and most incautiously told him my name: since which he has been leading me a dance which may or may not have turned my hair grey."

"The reverend father?" echoed Captain Alan.

"He has not," said I, turning upon my guide, who stood apart with a baffling smile, "as yet done me the honour to reciprocate my weak confidences."

Captain Alan too stared at him. "Are you a priest, sir?" he demanded.

He was answered by a bow. "You didn't know

it?" cried I. "It's the one thing he has allowed me to discover."

"But I understood that you were a scholar, sir——"

"The two callings are not incompatible, I hope?"

"—of the University of Salamanca: a Doctor, too. My memory is yet weak, but surely I had it from you own lips that you were a Doctor?"

"—of Moral Philosophy," the old man answered with another bow. "Of the College of the Conception—now, alas! destroyed."

"The care with which you have tended me, sir, has helped my mistake: and now my gratitude for it must help my apologies. I fear I have, from time to time, allowed my tongue to take many liberties with your profession."

"You have, to be sure, been somewhat hard with us."

"My prejudice is an honest one, sir."

"Of that there can be no possible doubt."

"But it must frequently have pained you."

"Not the least in the world," the old Doctor assured him, almost with *bonhomie*. "Besides, you were suffering from sunstroke."

My kinsman eyed him; and I could have laughed to watch it—that gaze betrayed a faint expiring hope that, after all, his diatribes against the Scarlet Woman had shaken the Doctor—upon whom (I need scarcely say) they had produced about as much effect as upon the rock of Rueda itself. And I think that, though regretfully, he must at length have realised this, for he sank back on the pillow

again with a gentle weariness in every line of his Don Quixote face.

"Ah, yes, from sunstroke! My cousin"—here he turned towards me—"this gentleman—or, as I must now learn to call him, this most reverend Doctor of Philosophy, Gil Gonsalvez de Covadonga—found me some days ago stretched unconscious beside the highroad to Tordesillas, and in two ways has saved my life: first, by conveying me to this hiding-place, for the whole *terrain* was occupied by Marmont's troops, and I lay there in my scarlet tunic, a windfall for the first French patrol that might pass; and, secondly, by nursing me through delirium back to health of mind and strength of body."

"The latter has yet to come, Señor Capitano," the Doctor interposed.

And I: "My cousin, your distaste for disguise will yet be the death of you. But tell me, what were you doing in this neighbourhood?"

"Why, watching Marmont, to be sure, as my orders were."

"Your orders? You don't mean to tell me that Lord Wellington knows of your return!"

"I reported myself to him on the nineteenth of last month in the camp on San Christoval: he gave me my directions that same evening."

"But, Heavens!" I cried, "it is barely a week ago that I returned from the north and had an hour's interview with him; and he never mentioned your name, though aware (as he must be) that no news in the world could give me more joy."

"Is that so, cousin?" He gazed at me earnestly and wistfully, as I thought.

"You know it is so," I answered, turning my face away that he might not see my emotion.

"As for Lord Wellington's silence," Captain Alan went on, after musing a while, "he has a great capacity for it, as you know; and perhaps he has persuaded himself that we work better apart. Our later performances in and around Sabugal might well excuse that belief."

"But now I suppose you have some message for him. Is it urgent? Or will you satisfy me first how you came here—you, whom I left a prisoner on the road to Bayonne and, as I desperately thought, to execution?"

"There is no message, for I broke down before my work had well recommenced; and Wellington knows of my illness and my whereabouts, so there is no urgency."

He glanced at the Doctor and so did I. "The reverend father's behaviour assuredly suggested urgency," I said.

"And was there none?" asked the old man quietly. "You sons of war chase the oldest of human illusions: to you nothing is of moment but the impact of brutal forces or the earthly cunning which arrays and moves them. To me all this is less hateful than contemptible, in moment not comparable with the joy of a single human soul. Believe me, my sons, although the French have destroyed my peerless University—*fortis Salamantina, arx sapientiæ*—I were less eager to hurry God's avenging hand on them than to bring together two souls which in the pure joy of meeting soar for a moment together, and, fraternising, forget this world.

Nay, deny it not: for I saw it, standing by. Least of all be ashamed of it."

"I am not sure that I understand you, holy father," I answered. "But you have done us a true service, and shall be rewarded by a confession—from a stubborn heretic, too." I glanced at Captain Alan mischievously.

My kinsman put up a hand in protest.

"Oh, I will prepare the way for you," said I: "and by and by you will be astonished to find how easy it comes." I turned to the Doctor Gonsalvez. "You must know, then, my father, that the Captain and I, though we follow the same business and with degrees of success we are too amiable to dispute about, yet employ very different methods. He, for instance, scorns disguises, while I pride myself upon mine. And, by the way, as a Professor of Moral Philosophy, you are doubtless used to deciding questions of casuistry?"

"For twenty years, more or less, I have presided at the public disputations in the Sala del Claustro of our University."

"Then perhaps you will resolve me the moral difference between hiding in a truss of hay and hiding under a wig? For, in faith, I can see none."

"That is matter for the private conscience," broke in Captain Alan.

"Pardon me," suggested the Doctor; "you promised me a narrative, I believe."

"We'll proceed, then. Our methods—this, at least, is important—were different: which made it the more distressing that the similarity of our names

confused us in our enemies' minds, who grossly mistook us for one and the same person: which not only humiliated us as artists but ended in positive inconvenience. At Sabugal, in April last, after a bewildering comedy of errors, the Duke of Ragusa captured my kinsman here, and held him to account for some escapade of mine, of which, as a matter of fact, he had no knowledge whatever. You follow me?"

The Doctor nodded gravely.

"Well, Marmont showed no vindictiveness, but said in effect, 'You have done, sir, much damage to our arms, and without stretching a point I might have you hanged for a spy. I shall, however, treat you leniently, and send you to France into safe keeping, merely exacting your promise that you will not consent to be released by any of the *partidas* on the journey through Spain.' My cousin might have answered that he had never done an hour's scouting in his life save in the uniform of a British officer, and nothing whatever to deserve the death of a spy. Suspecting, however, that I might be mixed up in the business, he gave his parole and set out for the frontier under the guard of a young cavalry officer and one trooper.

"Meanwhile I had word of his capture: and knowing nothing of this parole, I posted to Lord Wellington, obtained a bond for twelve thousand francs payable for my kinsman's rescue, sought out the guerilla chief, Mina, borrowed two men on Wellington's bond—the scoundrel would lend no more—and actually brought off the rescue at Beasain, a few miles on this side of the frontier.

One of our shots broke the young officer's sword-arm, the trooper was pitched from his horse and stunned, and behold! my kinsman in our hands, safe and sound.

"It was then, reverend father, that I first heard of his parole. He informed me of it, and while thanking me for my succour, refused to accept it. 'Very well done,' say you as a Doctor of Morality. But meanwhile I was searching the young officer, and finding a letter upon him from the Duke of Ragusa, broke the seal. 'Not so well done,' say you: but again wait a moment. This letter was addressed to the Governor of Bayonne, and gave orders that Captain McNeill, as a spy and a dangerous man, should be forwarded to Paris in irons. There was also a hint that a request for his execution might accompany him to Paris. And this was a prisoner who, on promise of clemency, had given his parole! Now what, in your opinion, was a fair course for our friend here, on proof of this dirty treachery?"

"We will reserve this as Question Number Two," answered the Doctor gravely, "and proceed with the narrative, which (I opine) goes on to say that Captain McNeill preferred his oath to the excuse for considering it annulled, collected his escort, shook hands with you, and went forward to his fate."

"A man must save his soul," Captain McNeill explained modestly.

"You are to me, sir, a heretic (pardon my saying it); which prevents me from taking as cheerful a view as I could wish concerning your soul. But assuredly you saved your honour."

"Well, I hope so," the Captain answered, picking up the story: "but really, in the sequel, I had to take some decisions which, obvious as they seemed at the time, have since caused me grave searchings of heart, and upon which I shall be grateful for your opinion."

"Am I appealed to as a priest?"

"Most certainly not, but as a Professor—a title for which, by the way, we have in Scotland an extraordinary reverence. I rode on, sir, with my escort, and that night we reached Tolosa, where the young Lieutenant—his name was Gérard—found a surgeon to set his bone. He suffered considerable pain, yet insisted next morning upon proceeding with me. I imagine his motives to have been mixed; but please myself with thinking that a latent desire to serve me made one of them. On the other hand, the seal of Marmont's letter had been broken in his keeping; a serious matter for a young officer, and one which he would naturally desire to defer explaining. At Tolosa he accounted for his wound by some tale of brigands and a chance shot at long range. On the morrow we rode to Irun and crossed the Bidassoa. We were now on French soil. Throughout the morning he had spoken little, and I too had preferred my own thoughts. But now, as we broke our fast and cracked a bottle together at the first tavern on the French shore, I opened fire by asking him if he yet carried the Marshal's letter with the broken seal. 'To be sure,' said he. 'And what will you do with it?' I went on. 'Why, deliver it, I suppose, to the Governor of Bayonne, to whom it is addressed.' 'And, when asked to

account for the broken seal, you will tell him the exact truth about it and the rescue?' 'I must,' he answered; 'and I hope my report will help you, sir. It will not be my fault if it does not.' 'You are an excellent fellow,' said I; 'but it will help me little. You do not know the contents of that letter as I do—not willingly, but because it was read aloud in my presence by the man who opened it.' And, before he could remonstrate, I had told him its purport. Now, sir, that was not quite fair to the young man, and I am not sure that it was strictly honourable?"

Captain McNeill paused with a question in his voice.

"Proceed, sir," said the Doctor: "I reserve this as Question Number Three, remarking only that the young man owed you something for having saved his life."

"Just so; and that is where the unfairness came in. He was inexpressibly shocked. 'Why,' he cried, 'the Marshal had put you under parole!' 'So far as the frontier,' said I. 'The promise upon which I swore was that I would not consent to be released by the *partidas* on my journey through Spain. Once in France, I could not escape his vengeance. Now for this very reason I have a right to interpret my promise strictly, and I consider that during the past half-hour my parole has expired.' 'I cannot deny it,' he allowed, and took a pace or two up and down the room, then halted in front of me. 'You would suggest, sir, that since this letter was taken from me by the *partidas*, and you and I alone know that it was restored, I owe you the favour of sup-

pressing it.' 'Good Heavens! my young friend,' I exclaimed, 'I suggest nothing of the sort. I may ask you to risk for my sake a professional ambition which is very dear to you, but certainly not to imperil your young soul by a falsehood. No, sir, if you will deliver me to the Governor of Bayonne as a prisoner on honourable parole—which I will renew here and extend to the gates of that city only—and will then request an interview for the purpose of delivering your letter and explaining how the seal came to be broken, with Joly'—this was the trooper—'for witness, you will gain me all the time I hope to need.' 'That will be little enough,' objected he. 'I must make the most of it,' said I; 'and we must manage to time our arrival for the evening, when the Governor will either be supping or at the theatre, that the delay, if possible, may be of his creating.' 'I owe you more than this,' said the ingenuous youth. 'And I, sir, am even ashamed of myself for asking so much,' I answered.

"Well, so we contrived it; entered Bayonne at nightfall, presented ourselves at the Citadel, and were, to our inexpressible joy, received by the Deputy-Governor, who heard the Lieutenant's report and endorsed the false paper of parole which Marmont had given me, and which, in fact, had now expired. The fatal letter Lieutenant Gérard kept in his pocket, while demanding an interview with the Governor himself. This (he was told) could not be granted until the morning—'the Governor was entertaining that night'—and with a well-feigned reluctance he saluted and withdrew. Outside the Deputy's door we parted without a word, and at

the Citadel gate, having shown my pass, which left me free to seek lodgings in the city, I halted, and, under the sentry's nose, dropped a note into the Governor's letter-box. I had written it at Hendaye, and addressed it to the Duke of Ragusa; and it ran—

"MONSIEUR LE MARÉCHAL,—I send this under cover of the Governor from the city of Bayonne, out of which I hope to escape to-night, having come so far in obedience to my word, which appears to be more sacred than that of a Marshal of France. My escort having been overpowered between Vittoria and Tolosa, I declined the rescue offered me, but not before your letter to the Governor had been broken open and its contents read, in my presence. This letter also I saw restored to its bearer, who during its perusal lay unconscious, of a severe and painful wound in his sword-arm. I beg to assure you that he has behaved in all respects as a gentleman of courage and honour: and, conceiving that you owe me some reparation, I shall rely on you that his prospects as a soldier are not in any way compromised by the miscarriage of your benevolent plans concerning me."

I laughed aloud, and even the Doctor relaxed his features.

"Bravo, kinsman!" said I. "If Marmont hates one thing more than another it's to see his majestic image diminished in the looking-glass. But—faith! I'd have kept that letter in my pocket until I was many miles south of Bayonne."

"South? You don't suppose I had any intention of escaping towards the Pyrenees? Why, my dear fellow, that's the very direction in which they were bound to search."

"Oh, very well," said I—a trifle nettled, I will confess—"perhaps you preferred Paris!"

"Precisely," was the cool answer. "I preferred Paris: and having but an hour or two to spare before the hotels closed, I at once inquired at the chief hotels if any French officer were starting that night for the capital. The first-named, if I remember, the *Hôtel du Sud*—I drew blank. At the second, the *Trois Couronnes*, I was informed that a chaise and four had been ordered by no less a man than General Souham, who would start that night as soon as he returned from supping with the Governor. I waited: the General arrived a few minutes before ten o'clock: I introduced myself——"

"General Souham," I groaned. "Reverend father, I have not yet tasted the wine of Rueda: it appears to me that the fumes are strong enough. He tells me he introduced himself to General Souham!"

"—and, I assure you, found him excellent company. We travelled three in the chaise—the General, his aide-de-camp, and your fortunate kinsman. A second chaise followed with the General's baggage. He and the aide-de-camp at times beguiled the road with a game of picquet: for myself, I disapprove of cards."

"Doubtless you told them so at an early stage?" I suggested, with a last effort at irony.

"I was obliged to, seeing that the General chal-

lenged me to a *partie*; but I did not, I hope, adopt a tone inconsistent with good fellowship. We travelled through to Paris, with a few hours' break at Orleans—an opportunity which I seized to purchase a suit of clothes more congruous than my uniform with the part I had to play in Paris. I had ventured to ask General Souham's advice, and he assured me that a British officer, though a prisoner on parole, might incur some risk from the Parisian mob by wearing his uniform in public."

"Cousin," said I, "henceforth pursue your tale without interruption. There was a time when, in my folly, I presumed to criticise your methods. I apologise."

"On leaving the tailor's shop I was accosted by a wretched creature who had seen me alight from the chaise in His Majesty's uniform, and had followed, but did not venture to introduce himself until I emerged in a less compromising garb. He was, it appeared, a British agent—and a traitor to his own country—and I gathered that a part of his dirty trade lay in assisting British prisoners to break their parole. He assumed that I travelled on parole, and insinuated that I might have occasion to break it: and, with all the will in the world to crack his head, I let the mistake and suspicion pass. For a napoleon I received the address of a Parisian agent in the Rue Carcassonne, whose name I will confide in you, in case you should ever require his services. For truly, although I had some difficulty in persuading him that I broke no faith in seeking to escape from France (a point in which self-respect obliged me to insist, though he himself treated it with irritat-

ing nonchalance), this agent proved a zealous fellow, and served me well.

"He fell in, too, with my proposals, complimented me on their boldness, and advanced me money to further them. I took a lodging *au troisième* in the Faubourg St. Honoré, and for a fortnight walked Paris without an attempt at concealment, frequenting the cafés, and spending my evenings at the theatre. One or twice I encountered Souham himself, with whom I had parted on the friendliest terms: but he did not choose to recognise me—perhaps he had his good-natured suspicions. I lived unchallenged, though walking all the while on a razor's edge. I had reckoned on two fair chances in my favour. There was a chance that the Governor of Bayonne, on finding himself tricked, would for his own security suppress Marmont's letter, trusting that the affair would pass without inquiry: and there was the further chance that Marmont himself, on receipt of my note, would remember the magnanimity which (to do him justice) he usually has at call, and give orders whistling off the pursuit. At any rate, I spent a fortnight in Paris; and no man questioned or troubled me.

"On the same morning that I paid my second weekly bill the agent called on me with a capital plan of escape, which (being a facetious fellow) he announced as follows: 'I wish you good morning, Mr. Buck,' he began. 'Sir,' I answered, 'I have no claim to such a designation. My pleasures in Paris have been entirely respectable, and I dislike familiarity.' 'Mr. Jonathan Buck, I should have said.' 'Sir,' I corrected him, 'if your clients are so

numerous that you confuse their names, I must remind you that mine is McNeill.' 'Pardon me,' he replied, 'you have this morning inherited that of an American citizen who died suddenly last evening in an obscure lodging near the Barrière de Pantin; and, in addition, a passport now waiting for him at the Foreign Office, if you have the courage to claim it. You resemble the deceased sufficiently to answer a passport's description: and if you secure it, I advise a speedy departure, with Nantes for your objective.' Accordingly, that same evening I left Paris for the Loire."

"You had the coolness to apply for that passport?"

"And the good fortune to obtain it. If anything, my dear fellow, deserves the degree of astonishment your face expresses, it should rather be my consenting to use disguise, and so breaking through a self-denying ordinance on which you have sometimes rallied me. Suspense—the danger from Bayonne hourly anticipated—had perhaps shaken my nerves. To be brief, I travelled to Nantes as Mr. Jonathan Buck, and in that name took passage in a vessel bound for Philadelphia and on the point (as I understood) of lifting anchor.

"I slept that night on board the *Minnie Dwight* —this was the vessel's name—in full hope that my troubles were at an end. But next morning her captain came to me with a long face and a report that some hitch had occurred between him and the port authorities over his clearing-papers. 'And how long will this detain us?' I asked, cutting short an explanation too technical for my understanding. He

answered that he had been to his Consul to protest, but could promise nothing short of a week's delay.

"Well, I saw nothing for it but to shut the cabin-door, make a clean breast of my fears, and desire him to help me in devising some new plan. He was a good fellow, and ingenious too; for after he had dashed up my hopes with the news that a similar embargo lay on all foreign ships in the port, his face cleared, and, said he, 'There's no help for it, but you must play the sea-lawyer and I the brutal tyrant. It's hard, too, upon a man who treats his crew like his own children, and victuals his ship like an eating-house: but a seaman's rig and forty dollars is all you need, and with this you'll fare off to the American Consul's and swear that I've made life a burden to you.' 'Why forty dollars?' I asked. He winked. 'That's earnest money that when you reach the United States you'll have the law of me for ill-usage.' 'And what shall I get in exchange?' 'You will get a certificate enabling you to pass from port as a discharged sailor seeking a ship.' I thanked him warmly, and agreed; climbed down the ship's side in my new rig, waved an affecting farewell to my benevolent tyrant, and sought the American Consul who (it seemed) was used to discontented seamen. At all events, he accepted without suspicion his share in the dishonouring comedy, took my forty dollars, and made out my certificate."

Here the Captain glanced at Doctor Gonsalvez, who blinked.

Said I: "Even a Protestant must sometimes understand the relief of confession."

"Armed with this," he went on, "I made my way to the mouth of the Loire, to St. Nazaire, between which and Le Croisic lies a small island where, in the present weakness of the French marine, English ships of war are suffered to water unmolested. For ten napoleons I bribed an old fisherman to row me out at night to this island, which we reached at daybreak, and to our dismay found the anchorage empty. We cast our nets, however, for a blind, and taking a few fish on our way, worked slowly down to the south-west, where my comrade (and a faithful one he proved) had heard reports of an English frigate nosing about the coast. Sure enough, between breakfast and noon we caught sight of her topmasts: but to reach her we must pass in full view and almost within point-blank range of a coast battery. We were scarcely abreast of it when a round-shot plumped into the sea ahead of us and brought us to, and almost at once a boatful of soldiers put off to board us.

"Their object, it turned out, was merely to warn us not to pass the battery, or the chances were five to one that the Englishman would capture us. In no way discomposed, my friend maintained that we (he passed me off as his son) must either fish or starve; that we had come a long distance, knew every inch of the coast, and ran no danger. He backed this up by bribing the soldiers with our whole morning's catch, and in the end they contented themselves by insisting that we should wait under the battery until nightfall and so depart. And this we did: but in the meanwhile, pretending

our anxiety to avoid her, we cross-questioned the soldiers so precisely on the Englishman's bearings that, when darkness fell and we slipped our anchor, we ran straight down on her without the slightest difficulty. She was the *Agile* sloop of twenty-four guns, and from her deck I waved good-bye to the fisherman, scarcely more delighted by my safety than he by his napoleons, which in my gratitude I had raised to fifteen.

"The *Agile* landed me in Plymouth without mishap: and so end my adventures. I ought to add, however, that, though my own conscience held no reproach for my trick upon Marmont, I sought and obtained permission from the War Office to select a prisoner of my own rank and exchange him with France; and with him I sent a precise account, which will afford some amusement to the Duke of Ragusa's enemies if he happen to have any at headquarters. You, my cousin, will doubtless consider this mere supererogation, but I should be glad of the reverend Doctor's opinion."

"We will reserve this," said the Doctor, "as Question Number Five."

"And you promptly reshipped for Lisbon, followed the army to Salamanca, and resumed your work?" said I.

"Even so: but I suspect that these adventures have rattled me. I am not the man I was: else I had not succumbed so easily to a mere *coup-de-soleil.* Will the reverend Doctor complete the narrative by describing how he found me?"

"In a ditch," said the reverend Doctor placidly. "My college was destroyed: my beloved Salamanca

in ruins. 'To a philosopher,' said I, 'all the world is a home; but especially such wine-vaults as are found in Rueda.' I saddled, therefore, my mule; loaded her with a very few books and still fewer sticks of furniture; more frugal even than Juvenal's friend Umbricius, *cui tota domus reda componitur una.* On my road, and almost under the shadow of this rock, my mule shied in the most ladylike fashion at sight of a redcoat prostrate in the dust. The rest you can guess: but assuredly I did not guess at the time that I had happened on one whose story will—if ever God restores me to my University—so illustrate my lectures as to make them appear that which they will not be—an entirely new set of compositions."

"Well," said I, "the hour is late: and however cheerfully you men of conscience and of casuistry may look forward to spending the night in these caves, I have seen enough, and have enough imagination at the back of it, to desire nothing so little."

"I will escort you," said the Doctor.

"That was implied," I answered: and after shaking hands with my kinsman and promising to visit him on the morrow, I suffered myself to be guided back along the horrible passages. On the way the Doctor Gonsalvez paused more than once to chuckle, and at each remove I found this indulgence more uncanny.

In the great cellar we came upon the sergeant of the 36th, still slumbering. I stirred him with my foot, and, sitting up, he amicably invited us to join him in a drink I did so, the Doctor drawing it from the spigot into a pail.

"Might be worse!" hiccupped the sergeant, watching me.

I agreed that it might be a great deal worse. Between us we steered him out, through the tunnel, along the ledge, and so to the archway under which Venus sparkled in the purple heaven. Here the Doctor bade us good-night, and left me to pilot my drunkard down the cliff. At the foot he shook hands with me in a fervour of tipsy gratitude: and I returned the grasp with an *empressement*, a passion almost, the exact grounds of which unless he should happen to read these lines and remember the circumstances—contingencies equally remote—he will spend his life without surmising.

THE HAUNTED YACHT

A YARN

IF any one cares to buy the yawl *Siren*, he may have her for £200, or a trifle less than the worth of her ballast, as lead goes nowadays. For sufficient reasons—to be disclosed in the course of this narrative—I am unable to give her builder's name, and for reasons quite as sufficient I must admit the figures of her registered tonnage (29.56), cut on the beam of her forecastle, to be a fraud. I will be perfectly frank; there is a mystery about the yacht. But I gave £400 for her in the early summer of 1890, and thought her dirt cheap. She was built under the old "Thames rule," that is, somewhere between 1875 and 1880, and was therefore long and narrow to begin with. She has been lengthened since. Nevertheless, though nobody could call her a dry boat, she will behave herself in any ordinary sea, and come about quicker than most of her type. She is fast, has sound timbers and sheathing that fits her like a skin, and her mainmast and bowsprit are particularly fine spars of Oregon pine; her mizzen doesn't count for much. Let me mention the newest of patent capstans—I put this into her myself—cabins panelled in teak and pitch-pine and cushioned with red morocco, two suits of sails, besides a big spinnaker

that does not belong to her present rig, a serviceable dinghy—well, you can see for yourselves without my saying more, that, even to break up, she is worth quite double the money.

In what follows I shall take leave here and there to alter a name or suppress it. With these exceptions you shall hear precisely how the *Siren* came into my hands.

Early in 1890 I determined, for the sake of my health, to take a longer holiday than usual, and spend the months of July, August, and September in a cruise about the Channel. My notion was to cross over to the French coast, sail down as far as Cherbourg, recross to Salcombe, and thence idle westward to Scilly, and finish up, perhaps, with a run over to Ireland. This, I say, was my notion: you could not call it a plan, for it left me free to anchor in any port I chose, and to stay there just as long as it amused me. One fixed intention I had, and one only—to avoid the big regattas. Money had to be considered, and I thought at first of hiring. I wanted something between twenty-five and forty tons, small enough to be worked by myself and a crew of three or at most three men and a boy, and large enough to keep us occupied while at sea.

Of course, I studied the advertisement columns, and for some time found nothing that seemed even likely to suit. But at last in *The Field*, and in the left-hand bottom corner—where it had been squeezed by the lists of the usual well-known agencies—I came on the following:—

> "YAWL, 35 tons. For immediate SALE, that fast and comfortable cruiser *Siren*. Lately

refitted and now in perfect condition throughout. Rigging, etc., as good as new. Cabin appointments of unusual richness and taste. £400. Apply, Messrs. Dewy and Moss, Agents and Surveyors, Portside Street, F——."

On reading this I took Lloyd's *Yacht Register* from its shelf, and hunted for further details. *Sirens* crowd pretty thickly in the Register; only a little less thickly than *Undines*. Including *Sirenes* and *Sirenas*, I found some fourteen—and not a yawl amongst them, nor anything of her tonnage. There were two more in Lloyd's *List of American Yachts*—one a centre-board schooner, the other a centre-board sloop; and, in a further list, I came upon a *Siren* that had changed her name to *Mirage*—a screw-schooner of one hundred and ninety tons, owned by no less a person than the Marquis of Ormonde. On the whole it seemed pretty clear that Lloyd knew not of the existence of this "fast and comfortable cruiser" of thirty-five tons.

However, if half the promises of the advertisement were genuine, the chance ought not to be lost for lack of further inquiry. So I sat down there and then and wrote a letter to the poetically-named Dewy and Moss, asking some questions in detail about the boat, and, in particular, where she was to be seen.

The answer came by return of post. The boat had been laid up since the autumn in a sheltered creek of the F—— River, about three-quarters of a mile up from the harbour side, where Messrs. Dewy and Moss transacted business. The keys lay at their office, and she could be inspected at any time.

Her sails, gear, and movable furniture were stored in a roomy loft at the back of Messrs. Dewy and Moss's own premises. Their client was a lady who wished to keep her name concealed—at any rate during the preliminaries; but they had full power to conduct the sale. The yacht was a bargain. The lady wished to be rid of it at once; but they might mention that she would not take a penny less than the quoted price of £400. They would be happy to deal with me in that or any other line of business; and they enclosed their card.

The card bore witness to the extraordinary versatility of Messrs Dewy and Moss, if to nothing else. Here is the digest of it:—"Auctioneers; Practical Valuers; House and Estate Agents; Business Brokers; Ship Brokers; Accountants and Commission Merchants; Servants' Registry Office; Fire, Life, Accident, and Plate Glass Insurance Effected; Fire Claims prepared and adjusted; Live Stock Insured; Agents for Gibson's Non-Slipping Cycles; Agents for Packington's Manures, the best and cheapest for all crops; Valuations for Probate; Emigration Agents; Private Arrangements negotiated with Creditors; Old Violins cleaned and repaired; Vice-Consulate for Norway and Sweden."

I cannot say this card produced quite the impression which its composers no doubt desired. It seemed to me that Messrs. Dewy and Moss had altogether too many strings to their bow. And the railway journey to F—— was a long one. So I hesitated for two days; and on the late afternoon of the third found myself some three hundred miles from home, standing in a windy street full of the

blown odours of shipping, and pulling at a bell which sounded with terrifying alacrity just on the other side of the door. A window was thrown up, right above me, and a head appeared (of Dewy, as it turned out), and invited me to come upstairs.

Mr. Dewy met me on the landing, introduced himself, and led me into his office, where a fat young woman sat awkwardly upon a wooden chair several inches too high for her. Hastily reviewing the many professional capacities in which Mr. Dewy could serve her, I decided that she must be a cook in search of a place. The agent gave me the only other chair in the room—it was clear that in their various feats of commercial dexterity the firm depended very little upon furniture—and balanced himself on the edge of his knee-hole table. He was a little, round man, and his feet dangled three inches from the floor. He looked honest enough, and spoke straightforwardly.

"You have come about the yacht, sir. You would wish to inspect her at once? This is most unfortunate! Your letter only reached us this afternoon. The fact is, my partner, Mr. Moss, has gone off for the day to N—— to attend a meeting of the Amateur Bee-keepers' Association—my partner is an enthusiast upon bee-culture."

The versatility of Moss began to grow bewildering.

"—and will not be back until late to-night. As for me," he consulted his watch, "I am due in half an hour's time to conduct the rehearsal of a service of song at the Lady Huntingdon's Chapel, down the street, where I play the harmonium."

The diversity of Dewy dazed me.

"You are staying the night at F——?" he said.

"Why, yes. I sleep at the Ship Inn, but hoped to leave early to-morrow."

"Of course you could inspect the sails and gear at once; they are in the loft behind." He jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

"So I understand, but it would be better to see the boat first."

"Naturally, naturally. I hope you see how I am placed? You would not desire me, I feel sure, to disappoint the chapel members who will be waiting presently for their rehearsal. Stay . . . perhaps you would not greatly object to rowing up and inspecting the yacht by yourself? Here are the keys, and my boat is at your disposal; or, if you prefer it, a waterman——"

"Nothing would suit me better, if you don't mind my using the boat."

"It will be a favour, sir, your using her, I assure you. This way, if you please."

He jumped down from the table and led the way downstairs, and through some very rickety back premises to the quay door, where his boat lay moored to a frape. As I climbed down and cast off, Mr. Dewy pulled out his watch again.

"The evenings are lengthening, and you will have plenty of time. Half an hour to high water; you will have the tide with you each way. The keys will open everything on board. By the way, you can't miss her—black, with a tarnished gilt line, moored beside a large white schooner, just three-quarters of a mile up. You can tie up the boat to the frape on your return; to-morrow will do for the

keys; at your service any time after nine a.m. Good evening, sir!"

Mr. Dewy turned and hurried back to his client, whose presence during our interview he had completely ignored.

The sun had dropped behind the tall hills that line the western shore of the beautiful F—— River; but a soft yellow light, too generously spread to dazzle, suffused the whole sky, and was reflected on the tide that stole up with scarcely a ripple. A sharp bend of the stream brought me in sight of the two yachts, not fifty yards away—their inverted reflections motionless as themselves; I rested on my oars and drifted up towards them, conning the black yawl carefully.

She struck me as too big for a 35-tonner, foreshortened though she lay—a wall-sided narrow boat, but a very pretty specimen of her type. Her dismantled masts were painted white, and her upper boards had been removed, of course.

Hullo!

There was a man standing on her deck.

She lay with her nose pointing up the river and her stern towards me. The man stood by her wheel (for some idiotic reason, best known to himself, her builder had given her a wheel instead of a tiller), which was covered up with tarpaulin. He stood with a hand on this tarpaulin case, and looked back over his shoulder towards me—a tall fellow with a reddish beard and a clean-shaven upper lip. I was drifting close by this time—he looking curiously at me—and I must have been studying his features for half a minute before I hailed him.

"Yacht ahoy!" I called out. "Is that the *Siren*?"

Getting no answer, I pulled the boat close under the yacht's side, made her fast, and climbed on board by way of the channels.

"This is the *Siren*, eh?" I said, looking down her deck towards the wheel.

There was no man to be seen.

I stared around for a minute or so; ran to the opposite side and looked over; ran aft and leaned over her taffrail; ran forward and peered over her bows. Her counter was too short to conceal a man, and her stem had absolutely no overhang at all; yet no man was to be seen, nor boat nor sign of a man. I tried the companion: it was covered and padlocked. The sail-hatch and fore-hatch were also fastened and padlocked, and the skylights covered with tarpaulin and screwed firmly down. A mouse could not have found its way below, except perhaps by the stove-pipe or the pipe leading down to the chain-locker.

I was no believer in ghosts, but I had to hit on some theory there and then. My nerves had been out of order for a month or two, and the long railway journey must have played havoc with them. The whole thing was a hallucination. So I told myself while pulling the coverings off the skylights, but somehow got mighty little comfort out of it; and I will not deny that I fumbled a bit with the padlock on the main hatchway, or that I looked down a second time before setting foot on the companion ladder.

She was a sweet ship; and the air below, though stuffy, had no taste of bilge in it. I explored main

cabin, sleeping cabins, forecastle. The movable furniture had been taken ashore, as I had been told; but the fixtures were in good order, the decorations in good taste. Not a panel had shrunk or warped, nor could I find any leakage. At the same time I could find no evidence that she had been visited lately by man or ghost. The only thing that seemed queer was the inscription "29.56" on the beam in the forecastle. It certainly struck me that the surveyor must have under-registered her, but for the moment I thought little about it.

Passing back through the main cabin I paused to examine one or two of the fittings—particularly a neat glass-fronted bookcase, with a small sideboard below it, containing three drawers and a cellaret. The bookcase was empty and clean swept; so also were the drawers. At the bottom of the cellaret I found a couple of flags stowed—a tattered yellow quarantine-signal tightly rolled into a bundle, and a red ensign neatly folded. As I lifted out the latter, there dropped from its folds and fell upon the cabin floor—a book.

I picked it up—a thin quarto bound in black morocco, and rather the worse for wear. On its top side it bore the following inscription in dingy gilt letters :—

JOB'S HOTEL, PENLEVEN,

VISITORS' BOOK.

J. JOB, *Proprietor.*

Standing there beneath the skylight I turned its pages over, wondering vaguely how the visitors'

book of a small provincial hotel had found its way into that drawer. It contained the usual assortment of conventional praise and vulgar jocosity :—

Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Smith of Huddersfield, cannot speak too highly of Mrs. Job's ham and eggs.—September 15, 1881.

Arrived wet through after a 15*-mile tramp along the coast ; but thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Job were soon steaming over a comfortable fire.—John and Annie Watson, March,* 1882.

Note appended by a humorist :

Then you sat on the hob, I suppose.

There was the politely patronising entry :

Being accustomed to Wolverhampton, I am greatly pleased with this coast.—F. B. W.

The poetical effusion :

Majestic spot ! Say, doth the sun in heaven
Behold aught to equal thee, wave-washed
Penleven ? etc.

Lighter verse :

Here I came to take my ease,
Agreeably disappointed to find no fl—
Mrs. Job, your bread and butter
Is quite too utterly, utterly utter !
J. Harper, June 3rd, 1883.

The contemplative man's ejaculation :

It is impossible, on viewing these Cyclopean cliffs, to repress the thought, How great is Nature, how little Man!

(A note: *So it is, old chap!* and a reproof in another hand: *Shut up! can't you see he's suffering?*)

The last entry was a brief one:

J. MacGuire, Liverpool. September 2nd, 1886.

Twilight forced me to close the book and put it back in its place. As I did so, I glanced up involuntarily towards the skylight, as if I half expected to find a pair of eyes staring down on me. Yet the book contained nothing but these mere trivialities. Whatever my apprehension, I was (as "J. Harper" would have said) "agreeably disappointed." I climbed on deck again, relocked the hatch, replaced the tarpaulins, jumped into the boat and rowed homewards. Though the tide favoured me, it was dark before I reached Mr. Dewy's quay-door. Having, with some difficulty, found the frape, I made the boat fast. I groped my way across his back premises and out into the gaslit street; and so to the Ship Inn, a fair dinner, and a sound night's sleep.

At ten o'clock next morning I called on Messrs. Dewy and Moss. Again Mr. Dewy received me, and again he apologised for the absence of his partner, who had caught an early train to attend a wrestling match at the far end of the county. Mr. Dewy showed me the sails, gear, cushions, etc., of the *Siren*—everything in surprising condition. I told him that I meant business, and added—

"I suppose you have all the yacht's papers?"

He stroked his chin, bent his head to one side, and asked, "Shall you require them?"

"Of course," I said; "the transfer must be regular. We must have her certificate of registry, at the very least."

"In that case I had better write and get them from my client."

"Is she not a resident here?"

"I don't know," he said, "that I ought to tell you. But I see no harm—you are evidently, sir, a *bonâ fide* purchaser. The lady's name is Carlingford—a widow—residing at present in Bristol."

"This is annoying," said I; "but if she lives anywhere near the Temple Mead Station, I might skip a train there and call on her. She herself desired no delay, and I desire it just as little. But the papers are necessary."

After some little demur, he gave me the address, and we parted. At the door I turned and asked, "By the way, who was the fellow on board the *Siren* last night as I rowed up to her?"

He gave me a stare of genuine surprise. "A man on board? Whoever he was, he had no business there. I make a point of looking after the yacht myself."

I hurried to the railway station. Soon after six that evening I knocked at Mrs. Carlingford's lodgings in an unattractive street of Bedminster, that unattractive suburb. A small maid opened the door, took my card, and showed me into a small sitting-room on the ground floor. I looked about me—a round table, a horsehair couch, a walnut sideboard with glass panels, a lithograph of John Wesley being rescued from the flames of his father's rectory, a coloured photograph——

As the door opened behind me and a woman entered, I jumped back almost into her arms. The coloured photograph, staring at me from the opposite wall above the mantelshelf, was a portrait—a portrait of the man I had seen on board the *Siren*!

"Who is that?" I demanded, wheeling round without ceremony.

But if I was startled, Mrs. Carlingford seemed ready to drop with fright. The little woman—she was a very small, shrinking creature, with a pallid face and large nervous eyes—put out a hand against the jamb of the door, and gasped out—

"Why do you ask? What do you want?"

"I beg your pardon," I said; "it was merely curiosity. I thought I had seen the face somewhere."

"He was my husband."

"He is dead, then?"

"Oh, why do you ask? Yes; he died abroad." She touched her widow's cap with a shaking finger, and then covered her face with her hands. "I was there—I saw it. Why do you ask?" she repeated.

"I beg your pardon sincerely," I said; "it was only that the portrait reminded me of somebody—But my business here is quite different. I am come about the yacht *Siren* which you have advertised for sale."

She seemed more than ever inclined to run. Her voice scarcely rose above a whisper.

"My agents at F—— have full instructions about the sale."

"Yes, but they tell me you have the papers. I may say that I have seen the yacht and gear and am ready to pay the price you ask for immediate

possession. I said as much to Mr. Dewy. But the papers, of course——"

"Are they necessary?"

"Certainly they are. At least the certificate of registry or, failing that, some reference to the port of registry, if the transfer is to be made. I should also like to see her warrant if she has one, and her sailmaker's certificate. Messrs. Dewy and Moss could draw up the inventory."

She still hesitated. At length she said, "I have the certificate; I will fetch it. The other papers, if she had any, have been lost or destroyed. She never had a warrant. I believe my husband belonged to no Yacht Club. I understand very little of these matters."

She left the room, and returned in five minutes or so with the open document in her hand.

"But," said I, looking over it, "this is a certificate of a vessel called the *Wasp*."

"Ah, I must explain that. I wished the boat to change her name with the new owner. Her old name—it has associations—painful ones—I should not like anyone else to know her as the *Wasp*."

"Well," I admitted, "I can understand that. But, see here, she is entered as having one mast and carrying a cutter rig."

"She was a cutter originally. My husband had her lengthened, in 1886, I think by five feet, and turned her into a yawl. It was abroad, at Malaga——"

"A curious port to choose."

"She was built, you see, as long ago as 1875. My husband used to say she was a broad boat for

those days, and could be lengthened successfully and turned into quite a new-looking vessel. He gave her an entirely new sheathing, too, and all her spars are new. She was not insured, and, being in a foreign port, it was understood he would have her newly registered when he returned, which he fully intended. So no alterations were made in the certificate here, and, I believe, her old tonnage is still carved up somewhere inside her."

This was true enough. The figures on the certificate, 29.56, were those I had seen on the beam in the forecastle.

"My husband never lived to reach England, and when she came back to F——, though she was visited, of course, by the Custom House officer and coastguard, nobody asked for her certificate, and so the alterations in her were never explained. She was laid up at once in the F—— River, and there she has remained."

Certain structural peculiarities in the main cabin —scarcely noted at the time, but now remembered —served to confirm Mrs. Carlingford's plainly told story. On my return to London that night I hunted up some back volumes of Hunt, and satisfied myself on the matter of the *Wasp* and her owner, William Carlingford. And, to be short, the transfer was made on a fresh survey, the cheque sent to Mrs. Carlingford, and the yawl *Siren* passed into my hands.

All being settled, I wrote to my old acquaintance, Mr. Dewy, asking him to fit the vessel out, and find me a steady skipper and crew—not without some apprehension of hearing by return of post that Dewy

and Moss were ready and willing to sign articles with me to steer and sail the yacht in their spare moments. Perhaps the idea did not occur to them. At any rate they found me a crew, and a good one; and I spent a very comfortable three months, cruising along the south-western coast, across to Scilly, from Scilly to Cork and back to Southampton, where on September 29, 1891, I laid the yacht up for the winter.

Thrice since have I applied to Messrs. Dewy and Moss for a crew, and always with satisfactory results. But I must pass over 1892 and 1893 and come to the summer of 1894; or, to be precise, to Wednesday, the 11th of July. We had left Plymouth that morning for a run westward; but, the wind falling light towards noon, we found ourselves drifting, or doing little more, off the entrance of the small fishing haven of Penleven. Though I had never visited Penleven I knew, on the evidence of many picture-shows, that the place was well worth seeing. Besides, had I not the assurances of the Visitors' Book in my cabin? It occurred to me that I would anchor for an hour or two in the entrance of the haven, and eat my lunch ashore at Mr. Job's hotel. Mr. Job would doubtless be pleased to recover his long-lost volume, and I had no more wish than right to retain it.

Job's hotel was unpretending. Mrs. Job offered me ham and eggs and, as an alternative, a cut off a boiled silver-side of beef, if I did not mind waiting for ten minutes or so, when her husband would be back to dinner. I said that I would wait, and added that I should be pleased to make Mr. Job's

acquaintance on his return, as I had a trifling message for him.

About ten minutes later, while studying a series of German lithographs in the coffee-room, I heard a heavy footstep in the passage and a knock at the door; and Mr. Job appeared, a giant of a man, with a giant's girth and red cheeks, which he sufflated as a preliminary of speech.

"Good day, Mr. Job," said I. "I won't keep you from your dinner, but the fact is, I am the unwilling guardian of a trifle belonging to you." And I showed him the Visitors' Book.

I thought the man would have had an apoplectic fit there on the spot. He rolled his eyes, dropped heavily upon a chair, and began to breathe hard and short.

"Where—where——?" he gasped, and began to struggle again for breath.

I said, "For some reason or other the sight of this book distresses you, and I think you had better not try to speak for a bit. I will tell you exactly how the book came into my possession, and afterwards you can let me have your side of the story, if you choose." And I told him just what I have told the reader.

At the conclusion, Mr. Job loosed his neckcloth and spoke—

"That book, sir, ought to be lyin' at the bottom of the sea. It was lost on the evening of September the 3rd, 1886, on board a yacht that went down with all hands. Now I'll tell you all about it. There was a gentleman called Blake staying over at Port William that summer—that's four miles up the coast, you know."

I nodded.

" . . . staying with his wife and one son, a tall young fellow, aged about twenty-one, maybe. They came from Liverpool—and they had a yacht with them, that they kept in Port William harbour, anchored just below the bridge. She would be about thirty tons—a very pretty boat. They had only one hired hand for crew; used to work her themselves for the most part; the lady was extraordinary clever at the helm, or at the sheets either. Very quiet people they were. You might see them most days that summer, anchored out on the whiting grounds. What was she called? The *Queen of Sheba*—cutter-rigged—quite a new boat. It was said afterwards that the owner, Mr. Blake, designed her himself. She used often to drop anchor off Penleven. Know her? Why of course I'd know her; 'specially considerin' what happened.

" 'What was that?' A very sad case; it made a lot of talk at the time. One day—it was the third of September, '86—Mr. and Mrs. Blake and the son, they anchored off the haven and came up here to tea. I supposed at the time they'd left their paid hand, Robertson, on board; but it turned out he was left home at Port William that day, barkin' a small mainsail that Mr. Blake had bought o' purpose for the fishin'. Well, Mrs. Blake she ordered tea, and while my missus was layin' the cloth young Mr. Blake he picks up that very book, sir, that was lyin' on the sideboard, and begins readin' it and laffin'. My wife, she goes out of the room for to cut the bread-and-butter, and when she comes back there was the two gentlemen by the window studyin' the

book with their backs to the room, and Mrs. Blake lyin' back in the chair I'm now sittin' on, an' her face turned to the wall—so. The young Mr. Blake he turns round and says, 'This here's a very amusin' book, Mrs. Job. Would you mind my borrowing it for a day or two to copy out some of the poetry? I'll bring it back next time we put into Penleven.' Of course my wife says, 'No, she didn't mind.' Then the elder Mr. Blake he says, 'I see you had a visitor here yesterday—a Mr. MacGuire. Is he in the house?' My wife said, 'No; the gentleman had left his traps, but he'd started that morning to walk to Port William to spend the day.' Nothing more passed. They had their tea, and paid for it, and went off to their yacht. I saw that book in the young man's hand as he went down the passage.

"Well, sir, it was just dusking in as they weighed and stood up towards Port William, the wind blowing pretty steady from the south'ard. At about ten minutes to seven o'clock it blew up in a sudden little squall—nothing to mention; the fishing-boats just noticed it, and that was all. But it was reckoned that squall capsized the *Queen of Sheba*. She never reached Port William, and no man ever clapped eyes on her after twenty minutes past six, when Dick Crego declares he saw her off the Blowth, half-way towards home, and going steady under all canvas. The affair caused a lot of stir, here and at Port William, and in the newspapers. Short-handed as they were, of course they'd no business to carry on as they did —'specially as my wife declares from her looks that Mrs. Blake was feelin' faint afore they started. She

always seemed to me a weak, timmersome woman at the best; small and ailin' to look at."

"And Mr. Blake?"

"Oh, he was a strong-made gentleman: tall, with a big red beard."

"The son?"

"Took after his father, only he hadn't any beard; a fine upstanding pair."

"And no trace was ever found of them?"

"Not a stick nor a shred."

"But about this Visitors' Book? You'll swear they took it with them? See, there's not a stain of salt-water upon it."

"No, there isn't; but I'll swear young Mr. Blake had it in his hand as he went from my door."

I said, "Mr. Job, I've kept you already too long from your dinner. Go and eat, and ask them to send in something for me. Afterwards, I want you to come with me and take a look at my yacht, that is lying just outside the haven."

As we started from the shore Mr. Job, casting his eyes over the *Siren*, remarked, "That's a very pretty yawl of yours, sir." As we drew nearer, he began to eye her uneasily.

"She has been lengthened some five or six feet," I said; "she was a cutter to begin with."

"Lord help us!" then said Mr. Job, in a hoarse whisper. "She's the *Queen of Sheba*. I'd swear to her run anywhere—ay, or to that queer angle of her hawse-holes."

A close examination confirmed Mr. Job that my yacht was no other than the lost *Queen of Sheba*, lengthened and altered in rig. It persuaded me,

too. I turned back to Plymouth, and, leaving the boat in Cattewater, drove to the Millbay Station and took a ticket for Bristol. Arriving there just twenty-four hours after my interview with Mr. Job, I made my way to Mrs. Carlingford's lodgings.

She had left them two years before; nothing was known of her whereabouts. The landlady could not even tell me whether she had moved from Bedminster: And so I had to let the matter rest.

But just fourteen days ago I received the following letter, dated from a workhouse in one of the Midland counties:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am a dying woman, and shall probably be dead before this reaches you. The doctor says he cannot give me forty-eight hours. It is *angina pectoris*, and I suffer horribly at times. The yacht you purchased of me is not the *Wasp*, but the *Queen of Sheba*. My husband designed her. He was a man of some property near Limerick; and he and my son were involved in some of the Irish troubles between 1881 and 1884. It was said they had joined one of the brotherhoods, and betrayed their oaths. This I am sure was not true. But it is certain we had to run for fear of assassination. After a year in Liverpool we were forced to fly south to Port William, where we brought the yacht and lived for some time in quiet, under our own names. But we knew this could not last, and had taken measures to escape when need arose. My husband had chanced, while at Liverpool, upon an old yacht, dismantled and rotting in the Mersey—

but of about the same size as his own and still, of course, upon the register. He bought her of her owner—a Mr. Carlingford, and a stranger—for a very few pounds, and with her—what he valued far more—her papers; but he never completed the transfer at the Custom House. His plan was, if pressed, to escape abroad, and pass his yacht off as the *Wasp*, and himself as Mr. Carlingford. All the while we lived at Port William the *Queen of Sheba* was kept amply provisioned for a voyage of at least three weeks, when the necessity overtook us, quite suddenly—the name of a man, MacGuire, in the Visitors' Book of a small inn at Penleven. We left Penleven at dusk that evening, and held steadily up the coast until darkness. Then we turned the yacht's head, and ran straight across for Morlaix; but the weather continuing fine for a good fortnight (our first night at sea was the roughest in all this time), we changed our minds, cleared Ushant, and held right across for Vigo; thence, after re-victualling, we cruised slowly down the coast and through the Straits, finally reaching Malaga. There we stayed and had the yacht lengthened. My husband had sold his small property before ever we came to Port William, and had managed to invest the whole under the name of Carlingford. There was no difficulty about letters of credit. At each port on the way we had shown the *Wasp's* papers, and used the name of Carlingford; and at Lisbon we read in an English newspaper about the supposed capsizing of the *Queen of Sheba*. Still, we had not only to persuade the officials at the various ports that our boat was the *Wasp*. We knew that our enemies were harder to

delude, and our next step was to make her as unlike the *Wasp* or the *Queen of Sheba* as possible. This we did by lengthening her and altering her rig. But it proved useless, as I had always feared it would. The day after we sailed from Malaga, a Spanish-speaking seaman, whom we had hired there as extra hand, came aft as if to speak to my husband (who stood at the wheel), and, halting a pace or two from him, lifted a revolver, called him by name, and shot him dead. Before he could turn, my son had knocked him senseless, and in another minute had tumbled him overboard. We buried my husband in the sea, next day. We held on, we two alone, past Gibraltar—I steering and my son handling all the sails—and ran up for Cadiz. There we made deposition of our losses, inventing a story to account for them, and my son took the train for Paris, for we knew that our enemies had tracked the yacht, and there would be no escape for him if he clung to her. I waited for six days, and then engaged a crew and worked the yacht back to F——. I have never since set eyes on my son; but he is alive, and his hiding is known to myself and to one man only—a member of the brotherhood, who surprised the secret. To keep that man silent I spent all my remaining money; to quiet him I had to sell the yacht; and now that money, too, is gone, and I am dying in a workhouse. God help my son now! I deceived you, and yet I think I did you no great wrong. The yacht I sold you was my own, and she was worth the money. The figures on the beam were cut there by my husband before we reached Vigo, to make the yacht correspond with the *Wasp's*

certificate. If I have wronged you, I implore your pardon.—Yours truly,

"CATHERINE BLAKE."

Well, that is the end of the story. It does not, I am aware, quite account for the figure I saw standing by the *Siren's* wheel. As for the *Wasp*, she has long since rotted to pieces on the waters of the Mersey. But the question is, Have I a right to sell the *Siren*? I certainly have a right to keep her, for she is mine, sold to me in due form by her rightful owner, and honestly paid for. But then I don't want to keep her!

PARSON JACK'S FORTUNE

I

FROM Langona church tower you see nothing of the Atlantic but a wedge between two cliffs of a sandy creek. The cottages — thirty in all, perhaps—huddle in a semicircle of the hills about a spring of clear water, which overflows and leaps as from a platform into the hollow coombe, its conduit down to the sands. But Langona Church stands out more boldly, on a high grassy meadow thrust forward like a bastion over the stream's right flank. It has no tree, no habitation between it and the ocean: it breaks the northerly gales for the cottages behind and under its lee, and these gales have given its tamarisk hedge and even its gravestones so noticeable a slant inland that, by a trick of eyesight, the church itself seems tilted perilously forward.

Forward, in fact—that is to say, seaward—the tower does lean; though but by a foot or so, and now not perilously; the salt winds, impotent against its masonry, having bitten with more effect into the earth around its base. But the church has been restored, the mischief arrested, and the danger no longer haunts its vicar as it haunted the Rev. John Flood on a bright September morning in 1885.

He sat on a thyme-covered hummock by the valley stream, with knees drawn up and palms pressed against his aching head: sat as he had been sitting for half an hour past, a shovel beside him and an empty sack, which he had brought down to fill with clean river-sand. A chaffinch, fresh from his bath, flitted incessantly between the rail of the footbridge, a dozen yards below, and the boughs of a tamarisk beside it. He paid no attention to Parson Jack. Few living creatures ever did.

Even his parishioners—those who knew of it—felt no great concern that Parson Jack had been drunk again last night. There was no harm in the man. "He had this failing, to be sure: with a little liquor he talked silly, though not so silly as you might suppose. Let him alone, and he'll find his way home somehow. Scandalous? Oh, no doubt! But you might easily go farther and find a worse parson than Flood."

It never occurred to them that he felt any special remorse. His agonies were private, and his chance of redemption lay in this, that they neither ceased nor eased with time; perhaps in this, too, that he wasted no breath in apologetics or self-pity, but blamed himself squarely like a man.

Yet a sentimentalist in his place might have run up a long and tearful account against Providence, fate, circumstances—whatever sentimentalists choose to arraign rather than themselves. Five-and-twenty years before, Jack Flood had been a rowdy undergraduate of Brasenose College, Oxford; in his third year of residence, with more than a fair prospect of being ploughed—or, in the language of that genera-

tion, "plucked"—at the end of it; a member of the Phœnix Wine Club, owner of a brute which he not only called a "hunter" but made to do duty for one at least twice a week; and debtor among various Oxford tradesmen to the tune of something like £500. At this point his father—a Berkshire rector—died suddenly of a paralytic stroke, leaving Jack and his elder brother Lionel (then abroad in the new Indian Civil Service) to realise and divide an estate of £1200.

Six hundred pounds is a fair equipment for starting a young man in life; but not when he already owes five hundred, and has few brains, no decided bent, and only a little of the most useless learning. Jack surrendered two-thirds of his patrimony to his pressing creditors, sold his hunter, read hard for a term, scrambled into his degree, and was received, a month or two later, into Holy Orders. His father had sent him to Brasenose College as a step to this, and Jack had looked forward to being a parson some day—a sporting parson, be it understood.

For the moment, however, he was almost penniless; and he had answered in vain some dozen advertisements of curacies, when a college friend came to the rescue and prevailed on a distant kinsman to offer him the living of Langona, with a net annual stipend of £51, 18s. 6d. There are such "livings."

It was offered, of course, and accepted, merely as a stopgap. But twenty-five years had passed, and at Langona Parson Flood remained. It had cost him twenty of these to wipe off his Oxford debts,

with interest; but he had managed to retain the small remnant of his capital, and this with his benefice yielded an income better than a day labourer's. That he was still a bachelor goes without saying. In the summer he fished; in the winter he followed, afoot, a pack of harriers kept by his patron, Sir Harry Vyell of Carwithiel. These were his recreations. He could not afford to travel, and cared little for reading. His library consisted of his Bible, two or three small Divinity Handbooks, a *Pickwick*, *Stonehenge on the Dog*, and a couple of "Handley Cross" novels, with coloured illustrations by John Leech. Twice a year or thereabouts a letter reached him from his brother in Calcutta, who was apparently prospering, and had a wife and three children—though for some years the letters had brought no news of them.

"Something was wrong," Parson Jack decided after a while, finding that his messages to them met with no answer; and he felt a delicacy in asking questions. He believed that the children had been sent home to England—he did not know where—and would have liked to pay them a visit. But for him a journey was out of the question. So he lived on, alone and forgotten.

On Sundays he wore a black suit, which had lasted him for ten years, and would have to last for another five at least. On week-days he dressed in blue guernsey and corduroys, and smoked a clay pipe. His broad-brimmed clerical hat alone distinguished him from the farm-labourers in his parish; but when at work upon the church—patching its shingle roof, or pouring mortar into its

gaping wounds—he discarded this for a maroon-coloured cap, not unlike a biretta, which offered less surface to the high winds.

He knew nothing of architecture: could not, in fact, distinguish Norman work from Perpendicular; and at first had taken to these odd jobs of masonry as a handy way of killing time. He had wit enough, however, to learn pretty soon that the whole fabric was eaten with rot and in danger from every gale; and by degrees (he could not explain how) the ruin had set up a claim on him. In his worst dreams he saw it toppling, falling; during the winter gales he lay awake listening, imagining the throes and shudders of its old beams, and would be abroad before daybreak, waiting for the light to assure him that it yet stood. A casual tourist, happening on him at work, some summers before, had mistaken him for a hired mason, and discoursed learnedly on the beauties of the edifice and the pity of its decay. "That's a vile job you have in hand, my friend—a bit of sheer vandalism," said the tourist; "but I suppose the Parson who employs you knows no better." Parson Jack had been within an ace of revealing himself, but now changed his mind and asked humbly enough what was amiss. Whereupon the tourist pulled out a pencil and an old envelope, and explained. "But there," he broke off, "it would take me a week to go into these matters, and you a deal longer to understand. I'd enjoy twenty minutes' talk with your Parson. The church wants restoration from beginning to end, and by a first-class man. It deserves no less, for it's interesting throughout; in some points unique." "That would

cost money now?" suggested Parson Jack, pitching his voice to the true Langona sing-song. "Two thousand pounds would go a long way." — The tourist scanned the waggon-roof critically, and lowering his eyes, at length observed the Parson's smile. "Ah, I see! a sum that would take some collecting hereabouts. Parson's none too well off, eh?" "Fifty pounds a year or so." "Scandalous! Who's the lay impropriator?" He was told. "Well, but wouldn't he help?" Parson Jack shook his head; he had never asked a penny from Sir Harry Vyell, who was a notorious Gallio in all that concerned religion. He had a further reason, too. He suspected that Sir Harry chafed a little in a careless way at his continuing to hold the living, and would be glad to see him replaced by an incumbent with private means and no failings to be apologised for with a shrug of the shoulders. Sir Harry, he knew, was aware of these hateful lapses, though too delicate to allude to them, and far too charitable to use them (unless under compulsion) as a lever for getting rid of him. And this knowledge was perhaps the worst of his shame. Yet what could he do? since to surrender Langona was to starve.

"Your Parson might at least make a beginning," pursued the tourist. "A box, now, inviting donations—that would cost nothing, and might relieve a visitor here and there of a spare sovereign. He could put up a second box for himself: it's quite a usual thing in churches when the parish priest is poor. You might make the suggestion, if he's not too proud."

"I will," said Parson Jack, and after the tourist

had gone he thought much of these two boxes. Indeed, he made and fixed up the first that same week, though he labelled it "For Church Repairs," fighting shy of "Restoration" as too magniloquent. The second cost him long searchings of heart, and he walked over and laid the case before Parson Kendall, Rector of the near parish of St. Cadox, a good Christian and a good fellow, with whom he sometimes smoked a pipe. "Why not?" answered Parson Kendall; "it's the most ordinary thing in the world." "But Sir Harry may not like it." The Rector chuckled. "If he doesn't, he'll consult me; and I shall ask him why he hunts a pack by subscription."

So the second box was nailed beside the first, and excited little discussion. Indeed, the pair hung in so obscure a corner—behind the font—that at the first service only Parson Jack and the Widow Copping were aware of them. The Parson stumbled and hesitated so badly over the prayers that one or two worshippers felt sure he had been drinking; which was not the fact. The Widow Copping took no interest in collecting-boxes; and, besides, she could not read. So the innovation missed fire. Moreover, it suggested neither popery nor priest-craft, and only a fool would suspect Parson Flood of either.

The "Parson's Box" remained, provoking no criticism. He himself had a little plan for its contents. He would spend the money on a journey to his nephew and nieces, if they were anywhere in England. He would find out. There was no hurry, he told himself, with a queer smile.

There was not. The box provoked neither ill-criticism nor effusive charity. On Trinity Sunday, when he opened it and counted out one shilling in silver and sevenpence in coppers, Parson Jack pulled a wry face and then laughed aloud.

II

Toot—toot—toot!

The postman's horn in the village street above him shook the Parson out of his idleness, if not out of his dark thoughts. He sprang up, gripped his shovel, and began spading the white river-sand into his sack.

"It is useless, after all," said he to himself. "The crack on the south of the tower stands still, but the smaller and more dangerous one—the one on the weather side—is widening fast. This winter, even, may finish matters."

He took up a few more shovelfuls. "Anyhow, it will not last my time; and since it will not——" He paused, as a thought rose before him like a blank wall. If the church fell—nay, *when* it fell—this comrade which had taken possession of his purposes, his fears, his fate—this enigmatic building of which he knew neither the history nor the founder's name, but only its wounds—why, then his occupation was gone! He might outlive it for years, perhaps a third of a lifetime; but he had no hopes beyond. In imagination he saw it fall, and after that—nothing. And he laughed—not the laugh with which he had counted out the money in

his collecting-box, but one of sheer self-contempt, and passing bitter.

The impression had been so sharp that he flung a glance up at the grey tower topping the grey-green rise; and with that was aware of the postman swinging, with long strides, down the slope towards him.

He turned in confusion and resumed his shovelling. Why was the man coming this way, by a path out of his daily beat? Parson Jack stooped over his work. He wished to avoid greeting him. There was talk, no doubt, up at the village. . . .

But the postman was not to be denied. He stopped and hailed across the stream.

"Hulloa, Parson! I've just left a letter for you up at the Parsonage: a long blue letter, and important, by the look of it, with a seal—a man's hand coming out of a castle. Do you know it?"

"No," answered Parson Jack. "Did you come out of your way to tell me this?"

"Not quite; though I'd do as much for 'ee any day, out of friendliness. But, tell 'ee the truth, I was sent to seek you with a message."

"A message?"

"Sir Harry has ridden over from Carwithiel, and wants you up to church. He's there waitin' with his nephew, a narra-chested slip of a chap with a square-cut collar and a Popish sort of face."

Parson Jack lifted his shovel and passed his palm over its blade, which the sand had already polished. "Thank you," said he, "I'll be going at once."

But he made no motion to start while the postman stood eyeing him. A sudden selfish fear paralysed him. Had Sir Harry heard? And was this the end of his patron's forbearance? No; the news could not have reached Carwithiel so quickly. He had no enemy to arise early and carry it; to no living creature were even his follies of such importance.

"Don't forget your letter," the postman reminded him, moving off towards the foot-bridge.

Parson Jack watched him as he crossed it, and until he had scaled the western slope and disappeared over its shoulder. Then, kneeling by the stream, he dipped his head, and let the icy water run past his temples. When he raised it again his plain face was glowing, for hard fare and life in the open weather kept his complexion clear and ruddy. But the hand gripping the sack on his shoulder shook as he climbed the hill.

By the lych-gate he found two saddle-horses tethered, and just outside the porch stood Sir Harry Vyell—a strikingly handsome man with a careless thoroughbred look; in fact, well over sixty, but apparently ten years younger. By habit he dressed well, and was scrupulously careful of his person; by habit, too, he remained sweet of temper and kindly of speech. But beneath this mask of habit the heart had withered, a while ago, to dust, and lay in the grave of his only son.

"Ah? Good morning, Flood!" cried Sir Harry genially. Parson Jack, reassured, felt the colour rushing into his face. "I've brought over my nephew Clem to introduce to you—he's in Orders, you know

—scholar of Balliol, Fellow of All Souls, and what not. High Anglican, too—he'll be a bishop one of these days, if money doesn't make him lazy. He's inside, dancing with delight in front of your chancel-screen — or, rather, the remains of it. Church architecture is his craze just now—that and Church History. Between ourselves"—Sir Harry glanced over his shoulder—"he has a bee or two in his bonnet; but that's as it should be. Every lad at his age wants to eat up the world."

Parson Jack could remember no such ambition. They passed into the church together.

Now the surprise which awaits you in Langona Church is its chancel, which stands high above the level of the nave, and, rising suddenly beneath a fine Early English arch, carries the eye upward to the altar with a strange illusion of distance. Even in those days the first impression was one of rare, almost singular, beauty—an impression lost in a series of small pangs as your eye rested on the ruinous details one by one. For of the great screen nothing remained but two tall uprights, surmounted by hideous knops — the addition of some local carpenter. Between the lozenge-shaped shafts of the choir arches, the worm-riddled parclose screens dripped sawdust in little heaps. Down in the nave, bench-ends leaned askew or had been broken up, built as panels into deal pews, and daubed with paint; the floor was broken and ran in uneven waves; the walls shed plaster, and a monstrous gallery blocked the belfry arch. Upon this gallery Parson Jack had spent most of his careful, unsightly carpentry, for the simple reason that it had been

unsafe; and, for the simple reason that they had let in the rain, he had provided half a dozen windows with new panes, solid enough, but in appearance worthy only to cover cucumbers.

As he entered with Sir Harry, the Rev. Clement Vyell swung round upon him eagerly, but paused with a just perceptible start at sight of his unclerical garb.

"Let me introduce you, Clem. This is Mr. Flood."

Parson Jack bowed, and let his eyes travel around the church, which he had often enough pitied, but of which he now for the first time felt ashamed.

"We're in a sad mess, I'm afraid," he muttered.

"It's most interesting, nevertheless," Clement Vyell answered. He was a thin-faced youth with a high pedagogic voice. "Better a church in this condition than one restored out of all whooping—though I read on the box yonder that you are collecting towards a restoration."

Parson Jack blushed hotly.

"You have made a start, eh? What are your funds in hand?"

"Two pounds four shillings—as yet."

Sir Harry laughed outright; and after a moment Parson Jack laughed too—he could not help it. But Clement Vyell frowned, having no sense of humour.

"I patch it up, you know—after a fashion." Parson Jack's tone was humble enough and propitiatory; nevertheless, he glanced at his handiwork with something like pride. "The windows, for instance——"

The younger man turned with a shudder. "I suppose now," he said abruptly, staring up at an arch connecting the choir-stalls with the southern transept, "this bit of Norman work will be as old as anything you have?"

That it was Norman came as news to Parson Jack. He, too, stared up at it, resting a palm on a crumbling bench-end.

"Well," said he ingenuously, "I'm no judge of these things, you know; but I always supposed the tower was the oldest bit."

He broke off in confusion—not at his speech, but because Clement Vyell's eyes were resting on the back of his hand, which shook with a tell-tale palsy.

"The tower," said the young man icily, "is Perpendicular, and later than 1412, at all events, when a former belfry fell in, destroyed the nave, and cracked the pavement, as you see. All this is matter of record, as you may learn, sir, from the books which, I feel sure, my uncle will be pleased to lend you. I need not ask, perhaps, if in the course of your—ah—excavations you have come on any traces of the original pre-Augustine Oratory, or of the conventual buildings which existed here till, we are told, the middle of the thirteenth century."

He turned away, obviously expecting no answer, addressed himself henceforward to Sir Harry, and ignored Parson Jack, who followed him abashed, yet secretly burning to hear more, and wondering where all this knowledge could be obtained.

"But it is inconceivable!" Clement Vyell

protested to his uncle, half an hour later, as they rode back towards Carwithiel. "The man has had the cure of that parish for — how long, do you say?—twenty-five years, and has never had the curiosity to discover the most rudimentary facts in its history."

"A hard case," assented Sir Harry. "He lifts his elbow, too."

"Eh?"

"Drinks." Sir Harry illustrated the idiom, lifting an imaginary glass to his mouth. "Oh, it's notorious. But what the deuce can we do? Kick him out?—not so easy; and, besides, he'd die under a hedge. You're hard on him, Clem. He has his notions of duty. Why"—the Baronet laughed—"I've seen him on the roof with a tar-bucket, caulking the leaks for dear life. He's a gentleman, too."

Clement Vyell tightened his lips and rode on in silence.

. . . . . .

Left alone, Parson Jack stared around his church. His repairs, in which he had taken pride before now, seemed nakedly, hideously mean at this moment. But a new sense fought with his dejection—a sense altogether new to him — that his church had a history, a meaning into which he had never penetrated. The aisles seemed to expand, the chancel to reach up into a distance in which space and time were confused; and, following it, his eye rested on a patch of colour in the east window between the wooden tablets of the Law—a cluster of fragments of stained glass, rescued by some

former vicar and set amid the clear panes—the legs and scarlet robe of a saint, an angel's wing, a broken legend on a scroll, part of a coat-of-arms, azure with a fesse, wavy of gold—all thrown together as by a kaleidoscope gone mad. Each of these scraps had once a meaning: so this church held meanings, too long ignored by him, partly intelligible yet, soon to be mixed inextricably in a common downfall. For Clement Vyell might be wise in the history of architecture, but his eye had not read the one plain warning which stared a common workman in the face—that the days of this building were surely numbered, and were probably few.

Parson Jack had a mind to run after him. He must learn, and speedily, all about the church, its builders, this old colony of monks. But where? In books doubtless. Where could those books be found?"

He had almost reached the door, when his eye fell on the two collecting-boxes. With a sudden thought he paused, drew a key from the pocket of his corduroys, and unlocked his own—the Parson's box. A sovereign lay within.

He picked up the coin and considered it, a dark flush growing on his face. Parson Jack had a temper, though few guessed it. With an effort he controlled it now, dropped the sovereign into the box labelled "Church Repairs," and walked slowly out.

He had no longer a mind to run after Clement Vyell. Instead, he bent his steps towards the four-roomed cottage which he called the Parsonage and found too large for his needs.

On the sitting-room table lay a letter, in a large blue envelope with a red seal.

III

That same day, and soon after three o'clock in the afternoon, Parson Jack knocked at the door of St. Cadox Rectory.

The Rector, a widower, usually ate his dinner in the middle of the day, and immediately afterwards retired to his study (with a glass of hot brandy-and-water), presumably to meditate. At Parson Jack's entrance he started up from his arm-chair with a flushed face and a somewhat incoherent greeting, in the middle of which he suddenly observed that his friend's face, too, was agitated.

"But what brings you? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"No—o," answered Parson Jack dubiously. Then, "Oh no; on the contrary, I came to ask if you have any books bearing on this part of the world—county histories, ecclesiastical histories, and the like—especially ecclesiastical histories. I want to read up about Langona."

The Rector's eyes twinkled. "This is rather sudden, eh?"

"After five-and-twenty years? I suppose it is." Parson Jack blushed like a schoolboy; but he laughed, nevertheless, for he held news, and it bubbled within him.

"Preparing a lecture?"

"No; the fact is"—he straightened his face—

"I've just learnt of my brother Lionel's death in India. I've never seen him since we were boys," he added apologetically.

"H'm, h'm." The Rector paid his respect to Death in a serious little cough. "Still, I don't quite understand——"

"He has left me five thousand pounds."

"Ah? A very tidy sum—my dear Flood, I congratulate you; with all my heart I do. You have the prospect now of many happy days." He shook his friend's hand warmly. "But—excuse me—what has this to do with reading ecclesiastical history, of Langona or any other place?"

"Well," Parson Jack answered shyly, sitting down and filling his pipe, "I thought of restoring the church."

"My dear fellow, don't be a fool—if I may speak profanely. Five thousand pounds is a tidy sum, no doubt, in Langona especially. But you'll be leaving Langona. You can buy yourself a decent little living, or retire and set up comfortably as a bachelor on two hundred and fifty pounds a year, with a cob, and a gig as you grow older."

Parson Jack shook his head. "I've been paying debts all my life, with the help of Langona," said he, puffing slowly. "And now I see that I owe the place repayment. But it isn't *that* exactly," he went on with a quickening voice and another of his shy blushes, "and I don't want you to mistake that for the real reason. The fact is, I'm attached to the place—to the church especially. It seems a silly thing to say, when I haven't troubled to learn ten words of its history, and don't know Norman

work from—well, from any but my own." He laughed grimly, biting on his pipe-stem. "But that can be mended, I suppose—and the old barn has become a sort of companion—and that's about the long and short of it."

The Rector leaned forward and tapped the bowl of his pipe reflectively on the fender-bars.

"You are the residuary legatee, I take it. Your brother was unmarried?"

"Oh dear, no! Lionel was married, and had three children—two girls and a boy: 'has,' I should say, for I imagine they're all alive—the widow, too. I don't know where they are. The lawyers merely speak of my five thousand as a legacy; they say nothing of the rest of the will."

"That's queer." The Rector reached for his tobacco-jar.

"Eh? You mean my not knowing the whereabouts of the family? Between ourselves, I believe there was a screw loose in Lionel's domestic affairs. I know nothing definite — positively. We corresponded now and then," continued Parson Jack —"say twice a year—and of late years he dropped all mention of them, and I gathered that questions were not wanted. But the wife and children are provided for, you may depend; and there's the pension."

"You are not an executor even?"

"No; it seems there were two; but one died. The survivor, a Major Bromham, lives in Plymouth —retired, apparently, and I suppose an old friend of Lionel's. It's through his solicitors that I had the news."

"And with it the first announcement of your brother's death. It seems queer to me that this Major Bromham didn't send you a line of his own. How do the lawyers put it?"

"Oh, the barest announcement. Here it is; you can read for yourself: 'On the instruction of our client, Major Bromham, late 16th Bengal Lancers, we have to inform you of the death, by syncope, at Calcutta, on the 5th of July last, of your brother, Lionel Flood, Esq., late of the Indian Civil Service, Assistant-Commissioner; and also that by the terms of his will, executed'—so-and-so—'of which our client is the surviving executor,' etc.—all precious formal and cold-blooded. No doubt his death was telegraphed home to the newspapers, and they take it for granted that I heard or read of it."

"Perhaps." The Rector rose. "Shall we have a stroll through the stables? Afterwards you shall have a book or two to carry off."

"But look here, Kendall; I came to you as a friend, you know. It seems to me all plain sailing enough. But you seem to imply——"

"Do I? Then I am doubtless an ass."

"You think this Major Bromham should have written to me direct—I see that you do. Well, he lives no farther away than Plymouth. I might run up and call on him. Why, to be sure"—Parson Jack's brow cleared—"and he can give me the address of the wife and children."

IV

Parson Jack walked home with a volume of Gilbert's *Survey* and another of the *Parochial History of Cornwall* under his arm, and Parker's *Glossary* in his skirt pocket. He began that evening with the *Parochial History*, article "Langona," and smoked his pipe over it till midnight in a sort of rapture it would be hard to analyse. In fact, no doubt it was made up of that childish delight which most men feel on reading in print what they know perfectly well already. "The eastern end of the north aisle is used as a vestry, and the eastern end of the south aisle is impropriated to the churchwarden's use." Yes, that was right. And the inscription on the one marble tablet was correctly given, and the legend over the south porch: "*Ego sum Janua, per me qui intrabit Servabitur.*" But the delight of recognition was mixed with that of discovery. The lower part of the tower was Early English, the upper Perpendicular (a pause here, and a reference to Parker); the nave, too, Perpendicular. Ah, then, it could only have been the upper part—the belfry—which fell in and destroyed the nave. What was the date?—1412. And they both had been rebuilt together—on the call of Edmund Stafford, Bishop of Exeter—in the August of that year. He read on, the familiar at each step opening new bypaths into the unguessed. But the delight of delights was to hug, while he read, his purpose to change all this story of ruin, to give it a new and happier chapter, to

stand out eminent among the forgotten Vicars of Langona. . . .

The book slid from his knee to the floor with a crash. He picked it up carefully, turned down the lamp, laughed to himself, and went off to bed, shivering but happy.

He awoke to fresh day-dreams. Day-dreams filled the next week with visions of the church in all its destined beauty. To be sure, they were extravagant enough, fantasies in which flying buttresses and flamboyant traceries waltzed around solid Norman and rigid Perpendicular, nightmares of undigested Parker. But they kept Parson Jack happy.

He had not forgotten to answer Messrs. Cudmore's letter, thanking them for their information, and adding that he proposed to pay a visit to Plymouth, and would call upon Major Bromham, with that gentleman's leave, and discuss the legacy. They replied that their client was just then in the north of Devon on a shooting-party, but would return to Plymouth by an afternoon train on the following Wednesday and grant Mr. Flood an interview.

The tone of this letter, as of the previous one, was unmistakably cold, but Parson Jack read nothing more in it than professional formality. On the Wednesday, however, when he reached Plymouth, he presented himself at Messrs. Cudmore's office, and was admitted to see the head of the firm, the manner of his reception began to puzzle him.

"Mr.—ah—Flood?" began Mr. Cudmore senior, with the faintest possible bow. "Our client, Major Bromham, is not returning until late this afternoon —by the four-forty train, in fact. I myself dictated

the letter in reply to yours, and fancied I had made it explicit."

"Oh, quite. I called merely in the hope that you would give me some further information about my brother's will; since, apart from this legacy, I know nothing."

"You must excuse me, but I prefer to leave that to the Major. In any case, the will is to be proved without delay, and may then, as you know, be inspected for a shilling."

Parson Jack, guileless man that he was, had a way of putting a straight question. "I want to know," said he quietly, "why on earth you are treating me like this?"

"My dear sir——" began the lawyer. But Parson Jack cut him short.

"I, for my part, will be plain with you. I ask to see the will simply because I know nothing of my brother's property, and wish to see how his wife and children are provided for. There is nothing extraordinary in that, surely?"

"H'm"—the lawyer pondered, eyeing him. Clearly there was something in this shabbily dressed clergyman which countered his expectations. "The person who could best satisfy you on this point would be Mrs. Flood herself; but I take it you have no desire to see her personally."

"Mrs. Flood? Do you mean my brother's wife?"

"Certainly."

"But—but is she here—in Plymouth?" Parson Jack's eyes opened wide.

"I presume so. Hoe Terrace, she informs me,

has been her address for these eight years. But of course you are aware——"

"Aware, sir? I am aware of nothing. Least of all am I aware of any reason why I should not call upon her. Hoe Terrace, did you say? What number?"

"Thirty-four. You will bear in mind that I have not advised——"

"Oh, dear me, no; you have advised nothing. Good-morning, Mr. Cudmore!" And Parson Jack, fuming, found himself in the street.

He filled and lit his pipe, to soothe his humour. But he forgot that the clergy of Plymouth do not as a rule smoke clay pipes in the public streets, and the attention he excited puzzled and angered him yet further. He set it down to his threadbare coat and rustic boots. It was in no sweet mood that he strode up Hoe Terrace, eyeing the numbers above the doors, and halted at length to knock out his pipe before a house with an unpainted area-railing, to which a small boy in ragged knickerbockers was engaged in attaching with a string the tail of a protesting puppy.

"I shouldn't do that if I were you," said Parson Jack, rapping the bowl of his pipe against his boot-heel.

"I don't suppose you would," retorted the small boy. "But then there's some parsons wouldn't smoke a clay."

Before Parson Jack could discover a repartee the door opened and a young man with a weak chin and bright yellow boots came out laughing, followed by a good-looking girl, who turned on the step to

close the door behind her. Although in black, she was outrageously over-dressed. An enormous black feather nodded above her "picture" hat, and with one hand she held up her skirt, revealing a white embroidered petticoat deplorably stained with mud.

In the act of turning she caught sight of the small boy, and at once began to rate him.

"Haven't I told you fifty times to let that dog alone? Go indoors this instant and get yourself cleaned! For my part, I don't know what Tillotson means, letting you out of school so early."

"I haven't been to school," the boy announced, catching at a dirty sheet of newspaper which fluttered against the railing, and nonchalantly folding it into a cocked hat.

"Your mumps have been all right for a week. There's not the slightest risk of infection, and you know it. You don't tell me you've persuaded mother——"

"I haven't said a word to her," the boy interrupted. "It isn't mumps; it's these breeches. If you can't find time to darn 'em, I'm not going to school till somebody can."

The young man tittered, and the girl—with a toss of her head and a glance at Parson Jack, who was pretending to tie his boot-lace—accepted defeat.

"Where did you pick up that puppy?" asked Parson Jack, after watching the pair up the street.

"What's that to you?"

"Nothing at all; only I'm a judge of wire-haired terriers, and he has a touch of breed somewhere. Well, if you won't answer that question, I'll try you

with another. Is that Gertrude—or Ada?" He nodded up the street.

"That's Ada. Gertrude is indoors, trimming a hat. You seem to know a heap about us."

"Not much; but I'm going to call and find out more if I can. You're Richard, I suppose?"

"Dick, for short. Ring the bell, if you like, and I'll run round and open the door. Only don't say I didn't warn you." This sounded like an absurd echo of the lawyer, and set Parson Jack smiling. "We don't subscribe to anything, or take any truck in parsons; and the slavey has a whitlow on her finger, and mother's having fits over the cooking. But come in, if you want to."

"Thank you, I will."

While Parson Jack ascended to the front door and rang at the bell, Dick skipped down the area steps, and presently opened to him with a mock start of surprise. "Beg your pardon," said he, "but I took you for the rates, or the broker's man." He winked as he ushered in the visitor. The running click of a sewing-machine sounded above stairs, and up from the basement floated an aroma of fried onions, and filled the passage.

"First turning to the right!" admonished the boy, and stepping past him, to the head of the basement stairs, called down: "Mother! I say, mother, here's a gentleman to see you!"

"Then," came the answer, "tell Gerty to step down and find out what he wants. I'm busy."

Parson Jack discreetly shut the door, and fell to studying the not over-clean drawing-room, which was tricked out with muslin draperies, cheap Japanese

fans, photographs—mostly of officers in the uniform of the Royal Marines—and such artistic trifles as painted tambourines, sabots, drain-pipes, and milking-stools. In one wicker-chair—the wicker daubed with royal-red enamel—lay a banjo; in another was curled a sleeping terrier—indubitable mother of the puppy outside. Near the door stood a piano with a comic opera score on the music-rest, open at No. 12, "I'm a Cheery Fusileery—O!" and on its rosewood top an ash-tray full of cigarette-ends and a shaded lamp the base of which needed wiping.

The terrier awoke, yawned, and was waddling down from its couch to make friends, when Master Dick returned.

"Mother wants to know who you are and what's your business. Gerty wouldn't come down when she heard you weren't Jack Phillips."

"Then tell your mother that I am your uncle, John Flood. That will satisfy her, perhaps."

"Whe—ew!" Dick took him in from top to toe, in a long incredulous stare; but turned and went without another word.

It may have been five minutes before the door opened and Mrs. Flood entered, with an air nicely balanced between curiosity, *hauteur*, and injured innocence—a shabby-genteel woman, in a widow's cap and a black cashmere gown which had been too near the frying-pan.

"Good morning."

Mrs. Flood bowed stiffly, not to say stonily, folded her wrists accurately in front of her, over her waistband, and waited.

"I am John Flood, you know—poor Lionel's

brother. I have just come from Cudmore & Cudmore's, the solicitors, to talk with you, if I may, about this will. It seems that I have a legacy, but beyond this I know nothing, and indeed until Messrs. Cudmore wrote I wasn't even aware of an illness."

Mrs. Flood's eyes seemed to answer, if such a thing could be said in a ladylike way, that he might tell that to the Marines. But, without relenting their hostility, she took occasion to mop them.

"It was a cruel will," she murmured. "My husband and I had differences; in fact, we have lived apart for many years. Still——" She broke off. "You know, of course, that he went wrong—took to living with natives and adopted their horrible ways—in the end, I believe, turned Hindu."

"God bless my soul! But he used to write regularly—up to the end."

"No doubt." The two words were full of spiteful meaning, though what that meaning was Parson Jack could not guess.

"His letters gave no hint of—of this."

Again Mrs. Flood's bitter smile gave him—politely—the lie.

"He drank, too," she went on, after a cold pause. "I had always supposed it was the one thing those natives didn't do. We thought of contesting the will on the ground of undue influence and his mind being gone."

"Did Lionel leave them much, then?"

"'Them'?" she queried.

"His friends over there—the natives."

"He left nothing but this legacy of five thousand

pounds, and the residue in equal shares to his poor family." Here her handkerchief came into play again. "Only, as it turns out, there isn't any residue —scarcely a penny more when all is realised— except the pension, of course." Unmasking her batteries with sudden spite, she added, "Even between you I couldn't be robbed of *that!*"

Parson Jack controlled himself. He was genuinely sorry for the woman. But either cheek showed a red spot and his voice shook a little as he answered, "This is a trifle gratuitous, then—your talk about undue influence."

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating," replied Mrs. Flood, with a small and vicious titter; not because she believed him to be guilty or that it would do any good, but simply because her instinct told her it would hurt.

"That seems to close the discussion." Parson Jack bowed with honest, if clumsy, dignity. "I am sorry, madam, for what you have told me; but my regrets had better be expressed to Major Bromham."

"*Regrets*, indeed!" sniffed Mrs. Flood.

And these were the last words he ever heard from her. A minute later he found himself in the street, walking towards the Hoe and drawing deep breaths as his lungs felt the sea-breeze. He had not the least notion of his direction; but as he went he muttered to himself; and for a parson's his words sounded deplorably like swearing.

"Hi! hi!" called a shrill voice behind him.

He swung right about and found himself frowning down upon Master Dick.

"How did you like it?" inquired that youngster,

panting. "She's a caution, the mater; but it wasn't a patch on what I've heard her promise to give you if ever she sets eyes on you."

"Indeed? How do you know, pray?"

"Why, I listened at the door, of course," was the unabashed reply. "But I don't believe a word of it, you know," he added reassuringly.

"A word of what?"

"That rot about undue influence."

"I thank you. Did you follow me to tell me this?"

"Well, I dunno. Yes, I guess I did. You're a white man; I saw that at once, though you *do* smoke a clay pipe."

"Thank you again for the reminder." Parson Jack pulled out his clay and filled it. "So I'm a white man?"

Dick nodded. "I'm not saying anything about the legacy. That's hard lines on us, of course; but I believe you. There's no chance of my being a gentleman now, like you; but"—with a wry grin—"I'm not the sort of chap to bear malice."

They had walked on through the gate leading to the Hoe, and were in full view now of the splendid panorama of the Sound.

"And why shouldn't you be a gentleman?" asked Parson Jack, halting and cocking down an eye upon this queer urchin.

"Well, there's a goodish bit against it, you'll allow. You saw what we're like at home." He looked up at Parson Jack frankly enough, but into his speech there crept a strange embarrassment, too

old for his years. "I mean, you saw enough without my telling you; and I mustn't give the show away."

"No, to be sure," assented Parson Jack. "Dick, you've the makings of a good fellow," he added musingly.

But the boy's eyes had wandered to the broad sheet of water below. "Crikey, there she goes!" he cried, and jerked his arm towards an unwieldy battle-ship nosing her way out of the Hamoaze, her low bows tracing a thin line of white. For half a minute they stood watching her.

"She's ugly enough, in all conscience," commented Parson Jack.

"She's a holy terror. But perhaps you don't believe in turrets. Nor do I, to *that* extent. It's tempting Providence."

"In what way?"

"Top-hamper," said Dick shortly. "But she's a terror all the same."

"What's her name, I wonder?"

"Sakes! You don't say you don't know the old *Devastation*? Why, it's fifteen years or so since they launched her at Portsmouth, and I hear tell she'll have to be reconstructed, though even then I guess they won't trust her far at sea. She has no speed, either, for these days. Oh, she's a holy fraud!" And Master Dick poured in a broadside of expert criticism as the monster felt her way and slowly headed around the Winter Buoy into the Smeaton Pass.

"Nevertheless, you wouldn't object to be on board of her?"

"Don't!" The boy's eyes had filled on a sudden. "You mayn't mean it, but it—it hurts."

. . . . . .

Four hours later, in the early dusk, Parson Jack stepped into the street, after shaking hands with Major Bromham at the door. What is more, the Major stood bareheaded in the doorway for some moments, and stared after him. Dick had echoed Lawyer Cudmore once that day; it was now the Major's turn to echo Dick.

"That's a white man," he muttered to himself. "Curiously like his brother, too—in the days before he went wrong. But Lionel Flood had a soft strake in him, and India found it out. This parson seems tougher—result of hard work and plain living, no doubt."

His musings at this point grew involved, and he frowned. "Says he knew nothing of Lionel's affairs—offers to show me all the letters to prove it; but this behaviour of his is proof enough. Deuced handsome behaviour, too. I wonder if he can afford it? Gad, what a pack of falsehoods that woman has poured into me! She always had a gift of circumstantial lying. I believe, if Lionel had kept a tight rein on her and shown her the whip now and then — but what's the use of speculating? Anyway, it's rough on the Parson, and if I hadn't to consider Dick and the girls——"

. . . . . .

Dusk had given way to gaslight, and Parson Jack still paced the streets, intending but still deferring to find a dinner and a night's lodging. He had shaken hands with Major Bromham in a

mood of curious exaltation. He had decided almost without a struggle. To his mind the question was a clear one of right and wrong, and no argument helped it. Still, a man does not renounce five thousand pounds every day of his life; and, when he does, has some right to pat his conscience on the back. He derived some pleasure, too, from picturing the pretty gratitude with which his beneficiaries would hear Major Bromham's message. He did not know Mrs. Flood.

But . . . his church? He had forgotten it, or almost forgotten; and the recollection came upon him like a blow. He halted beneath a gas-lamp in dismay; not in resentment at the shattering of his dream, for he scarcely thought of himself; not in doubt, for he had done rightly, and his church could not be restored at the expense of right; but in sheer dismay before the blank certainty that now his church must fall. Nothing could save it. He must go home to it, live with it, watch it to the inevitable end. He put out a hand against the iron pillar, and of a sudden felt faint, almost sick. As a matter of fact, he had eaten nothing since his early breakfast.

A few doors down the street the bright lamp of a tavern—the Sword and Flag—caught his eye. He tottered in and asked for a glass of brandy. It did him good, and he called for another. Some soldiers entering, with a girl or two, and finding a clergyman seated with his glass in this not over-reputable den, began to chaff. He answered gently and good-naturedly, but with a slight stutter—enough to hint at fun ahead; and they improved upon the hint.

By nine o'clock Parson Jack was silly drunk; at eleven, when the premises were closed, the police found him speechless; and the rest of the night he spent in the borough lock-up.

V

It appeared in the newspapers, of course. "Deplorable story: A clergyman fined for drunkenness." This was more than even Sir Harry could stand.

"I'm sorry for you, Flood," said he, when, three days later, Parson Jack appeared at Carwithiel to resign his living. "But you've taken the only proper course. Otherwise, you'd have driven us to an inquiry, sequestration, no end of a scandal. I've had to keep my eyes shut once or twice in the past, as you probably guess."

"You have shown me all the kindness you could," answered Parson Jack. "I won't disgust you with thanks, and there are no excuses." He picked up his hat and turned to go.

"Well, but look here; don't be in a hurry. What about your prospects? They're none too healthy, I'm afraid. Still, if a few pounds could give you a fresh start somewhere——"

"I have no prospects, but for the moment I wasn't thinking of myself. I was thinking of Langona and the old church."

"Oh, the church is all right! Clem—my nephew—has a fad in his head. He asked me yesterday for the living—in case you resigned. I tell him it's folly; a youngster oughtn't to play with his

chances. But he insists that it will do him good to fling up Oxford and play parish-priest for a year or two. He has taken a fancy to your church, and wants to restore it. He can pay for his whims: the money's all in his branch of the family."

"Restore it! The church—restored!"

Sir Harry looked up sharply, for the words came in a whisper of awe, almost of terror; and looking up, he saw Parson Jack's eyes dilated as a man's who stares on a vision; but while they stared there grew in them a slow, beatific surmise.

"The Lord taketh away," said Parson Jack. "Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Six weeks later the Rev. Clement Vyell was inducted into the living of Langona, vacant by the resignation of the Rev. John Flood. His first sermon announced that the church was to be restored without delay; that plans were even now being prepared by an eminent architect, and that, as soon as they arrived and were approved, tenders would be invited.

Mr. Vyell was in no hurry to take possession of the Parsonage; indeed, bachelor though he was, and professed ascetic, he decided that, to be habitable, it needed a wing and a new kitchen at the back. For the present he accepted his uncle's invitation to use the hospitality, and the library, of Carwithiel. Parson Jack might give up possession at his own convenience. Nevertheless he gave it up at once, packed his few belongings, and hired a bedroom at the Widow Copping's. It appeared that he, too, needed time to look about him.

And so he loitered about Langona until the

architect's plans were received, discussed, approved, and submitted to tender. A Bristol builder secured the contract.

The day after it was signed Parson Jack walked over to Carwithiel again, and asked leave to speak with Mr. Vyell. He wore his old working suit.

"I have come to ask a favour, sir," said he, speaking humbly. "I hear that the contract for the church has been given to Miles & Co., of Bristol; and I would take it kindly if you recommended me to them as a workman."

The new Vicar was taken by surprise, and showed it.

"I have picked up some knowledge of the work in these years," Parson Jack explained timidly. "And I know the weak points in the old fabric better than most men. As for steadiness," he wound up, "I only ask to be given a trial. You must discharge me the first time I give cause of complaint."

"What on earth could I say to the man?" Mr. Vyell demanded that evening, when he discussed the application with his uncle.

"I hope you accepted?" said Sir Harry sharply.

"Ye-es, though I fear it was imprudent."

"Fiddlestick! Speak a word for him to Miles; he won't find a better workman."

. . . . . .

So Parson Jack stayed at Langona, and beheld his best dream take shape, though not at his command, and yet in part by his fashioning. Nay, even some measure of that personal pride for which he had once bargained was restored to him during the

second year, on the day when the contractor—who shared the common knowledge of his past, but respected his unequalled knowledge of the old fabric and its weakness, his gentle ardour in learning, and his mild authority among the men—appointed him clerk of the works. In those days Parson Jack needed no man's pity, for all day long he redeemed a debt and wrought into substance an ambition that yet grew purer—as few ambitions do—in taking substance. And with it he wove another dream which, in the intervals of labour, would draw him out of the churchyard and hold him at gaze there, with his eyes on the wedge of blue sea beyond the coombe.

From the hour of his fall no strong drink passed his lips. His was an almost desperate case, but he fought with two strong allies. It was as though the old church, rallying under his eyes for a new lease of life, put new blood into him, repaying his love. Also he had Dick's letters.

"Upon my word," said Sir Harry to his nephew, "I've a mind to put Flood into the living again when this business is over and you tire of your whim. I suppose there's nothing to prevent it?"

There was nothing to prevent it; but as a reward it lay outside Parson Jack's speculation, perhaps beyond his desire. His reward came to him on the afternoon when, having mounted a ladder beside the new east window, he looked over his shoulder and saw Parson Kendall entering the churchyard by the lych-gate, and ushering in a youngster—a mere boy still, but splendid in the uniform of a freshly blown naval cadet.

Parson Jack can scarcely be said to have risen to the occasion. "Hullo, Dick!" he said, descending the ladder and holding out his hand.

But the Rector, standing aside, made a better speech; though this, too, was short enough.

"God fulfils Himself in many ways," said the Rector to himself.

THE BURGLARY CLUB

"YES," said the Judge, "I ought by this time to know something of Cornish juries. They acquit oftener than other juries, to be sure; and the general notion is that they incline more towards mercy. Privately, I believe that mercy has very little to do with it."

"Stupidity," said the High Sheriff sententiously, and sipped his wine. His own obtuseness on the Bench was notorious, and had kept adding for thirty years to the Duchy's stock of harmless merriment.

"Nothing of the sort," snapped his lordship. "You can convict a man, I presume, as stupidly as you can acquit him. No: with other juries a crime is a crime, and a misdemeanour is a misdemeanour. You tell them so and they accept it. But with Cornishmen you have first to explain that the alleged offence is illegal; next, you must satisfy them that it ought to be illegal; and then, if you choose, you can proceed to prove that the prisoner committed it. They will finally discharge him on the ground that he never had the advantage of such a clear exposition of the law as they have just enjoyed."

"Well, but isn't that stupidity?" persisted the High Sheriff.

The Judge turned impatiently and addressed a grey-headed man on his left. "Did I ever tell you, Mr. ——, how I once enjoyed the hospitality of a Cornish village, through the simple accident of being mistaken for a burglar?"

The grey-headed man—an eminent Q.C. and leader of the Western Circuit—dropped an olive into his glass of sherry. He had been dozing. Two or three guests and members of the Junior Bar drew their chairs closer.

"It was in 1845," the Judge began, "just after I had taken my degree, and I had been walking through Cornwall with a knapsack — no small adventure, I can tell you, in those days. The inhabitants declined to believe that anyone could walk and carry a pack for the fun of the thing, and I left a trail of suspicion behind me. The folks were invariably hospitable, though convinced that I was pursuing no good. You remember, Mr. ——, that when Telemachus visited Gerenia he was generously entertained, and afterwards politely asked if he happened to be a pirate. My case was pretty similar, only my Cornish hosts did not ask, but took it for granted.

"In the first week of August—to be precise, on the 4th—I reached Polreen Cove, and found lodging at the small inn. The spot and the people so pleased me that I engaged my rooms for a week. At the week's end I had decided to stay for a month. I stayed for almost two months.

"Well, as luck would have it, I had not been in Polreen three nights before there happened the first burglary within the memory of its oldest in-

habitant—if burglary it was. I incline to think that Mrs. Giddy, the general dealer, had left her shop-door unbolted, and that the culprit, after removing the bell—the door had two flaps, and the bell, hung on a half-coil of metal, was fitted to a socket inside the lower flap — had quietly walked in and made his choice. This choice was a peculiar one—six bars of yellow soap, a cullender, some tallow candles, a pair of alpaca boots, a pair of braces, several boxes of matches, an uncertain amount of cheese, a dozen pocket-handkerchiefs, a coloured almanack, three of Mrs. Giddy's brass weights, and the bell. He was detected two months later at Bristol, in the act of using one of the handkerchiefs, which illustrated the descent of Moses from Mount Sinai; and four other handkerchiefs were found in his possession, together with Mrs. Giddy's brass weights. He had disposed of the rest of the booty, and proved to be a stowaway who had been turned out of a Cardiff schooner on Penzance quay, penniless and starving. Nothing further was proved against him, and it still puzzles me how he made his way through the length of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset, on the not very nutritious spoils of Mrs. Giddy's shop.

"For the moment he got clear away. Not a soul in Polreen had set eyes on him, and as he entered the village by night so he departed.

"I know now that the excitement in the Cove was intense; that for weeks afterwards the women carried their silver teaspoons and chinaware to bed with them; and I should explain that the housewives of Polreen are inordinately proud of their

teaspoons and chinaware—heirlooms which mark the only degrees of social importance recognised among the inhabitants of that happy Cove. A family there counts its teaspoons as our old nobility counted its quarterings; a girl is judged to have made a good, bad, or indifferent match by the number of teaspoons she 'marries into'; and the extreme act of disinheritance is symbolised, not by the testamentary shilling, nor by erasing a name from the Family Bible, but by alienating the family plate-basket. In short, teaspoons are to the Covers what the salt-cellar was to the ancient Latin races.

"But at the time, though I could not help observing symptoms of suppressed excitement, the Cove behaved with an outward calm which struck me as highly creditable. To be sure, the men seemed to spend an extravagant amount of their time in the tap-room of the inn, which happened to be immediately beneath my sitting-room. Hour after hour the sound of their muffled conversation ascended to me through the planching, as I sat and studied —Dumas, I think. Low, monotonous, untiring, it lasted from breakfast-time until nine o'clock at night, when it ceased abruptly, the company dispersed, and each man went home to reassure and protect his wife. I suppose some liquor was required to start this conversation and keep it going, just as seamen use a bucketful of water to start a ship's pump; but I must admit that during my whole stay at Polreen I never saw an inhabitant who could be described as the worse for drink.

"I did not know that this assemblage in the

tap-room was unusual and clean contrary to the men's habits, and therefore may be excused for not guessing its significance. Nor was I familiar enough with Polreen to note an even more frequent change in the atmosphere and routine of its daily life. When the weather is fine, down there, the men put out to sea and the women go about their work with smiles. When it blows, the women go about their work, but resignedly and in a temper, which the men avoid by ranging up shoulder to shoulder along the wall by the lifeboat house, and gazing with approval at the weather; with approval, because it relieves them of the fatigue of argument. But should the day break doubtfully, and the men incline to give themselves the benefit of the doubt, then, indeed, you will learn who are masters of the Cove. For in extreme cases the women will even invade the 'randivoo,' and shrill is the noise of battle until the weather declares unmistakably for one side or the other. Does it refuse to declare itself? Then I can promise you that half an hour will see the men routed and straggling down the beach to their boats, arching their backs and ducking their heads, may be, under the parting volley.

"But, as I say, I did not know Polreen and its ways. It awoke no wonder in me to see the bulk of its male population ranged like statues, day after day, and from dawn till eve, against the wall by the lifeboat house, talking little (or ceasing, at any rate, to talk when I approached), smoking much, conning a serene sky, and the dimples spread on the sea by a gentle nor'-westerly breeze. At intervals one or two would leisurely fall out of the line and saunter

towards the inn, leaving their places to others as leisurely sauntering from the inn. It did, indeed, occur to me to wonder how they earned their living, for during the first fortnight, beyond the occasional hauling of a crab-pot, I saw no evidence at all of labour. It was on the tip of my tongue, once or twice, to question them; but, though polite, they clearly had no wish to be communicative.

"I found great difficulty in hiring a boat and the services of its owner. I wished to be rowed along the coast; to try for pollack; to inspect some of Polreen's famous caves. The men were polite again; but one boat leaked badly, another had been pulled up for the carpenter to insert a new strake, a third was too heavy, the owner of a fourth could not leave his business—it wouldn't pay him! At length I patched up a bargain with an old fisherman named Udy—or rather Old Tom Udy, to distinguish him from his son, who was Young Tom. He owned the most ramshackle old boat in the Cove: if the others were out of repair, his was manifestly beyond it. I took my life in my hands and struck the bargain.

"'When do 'ee want her?'

"'Now, at once,' said I; 'or as soon as you have had your dinner.'

"He went back to the company by the lifeboat house. He reminded me of some ancient king consulting a company of stone gods. They looked at him, and he looked at them. I suppose a word or two was said; half a dozen of them spat reflectively; nobody moved. Old Tom Udy came down the beach again; we embarked and pushed off, and

the row of expressionless faces watched us from the shore.

"In silence we visited the famous caverns. As we emerged from the last of these I essayed some casual talk. To tell the truth, I was beginning to feel the want of it, and of course I began on the first topic of local interest — the burglary.

"'The odd thing to me,' said I, 'is that you seem to have no particular suspicions.'

"'I'd rather you didn' talk of it,' said Old Tom Udy. 'I got my living to get, and 'tis a day's journey to Bodmin. Tho' you musn' think,' he added, 'that we bear any gridge.'

"'It seems to me that you men in the Cove treat the whole affair very lightly.'

"'Iss, tha's of it,' he assented. 'Mind you, tisn' *right*. Seemin' to me 'tis a terrible thought. Here you be, for the sake of argument, a Christian man, and in beauty next door to the angels, and the only use you make of it is to steal groceries. You don't think I'm putting it too strong?'

"'Not a bit.'

"'Well, I'm glad o' that, because, since you ask me, as a professing Christian, I cudn' say any less. But you musn' think we bear any gridge.'

"'I'm sure I wonder you don't. And the police still have no clue?'

"'The police? You mean Sammy Crego, the constable? Why, I've knawed en from a boy— pretty thing if any person in Polreen listened to he! No: us han't falled so low yet as to mind anything the constable says.'

"'Then the whole affair is as much a mystery as ever?'

"'Now, look 'ee here; I don't want to tell nothin' more about it. A still tongue makes a wise head; an' there's a pollack on the end of your line.'

"The wind stuck in the north-west, and day after day the regal summer weather continued. I grew tired of hauling in pollack, and determined to have a try for the more exciting conger. The fun of this, as you know, does not begin till nightfall, and it was seven o'clock in the evening, or thereabouts, when we pushed off from the beach. By eight we had reached the best grounds and begun operations. An hour passed, or a little more, and then Old Tom Udy asked when I thought of returning.

"'Why, bless the man,' said I, 'we've not had a bite yet!'

"He glanced at me furtively while he lit a pipe. 'I reckoned, maybe, you might have business ashore, so to speak.'

"'What earthly business should I have in Polreen at this hour?'

"'Aw, well . . . you know best . . . no affair o' mine. 'Tis a dark night, too.'

"'All the better for conger, eh?'

"'So 'tis.' He seemed about to say more, but at that moment I felt a long pull on the line, and for an hour or two the conger kept us busy.

"It must have been a week later, at least (for the moon was drawing to the full), that I pulled up the blind of my sitting-room a little before midnight, and, ravished by the beauty of the scene (for,

I tell you, Polreen can be beautiful by moonlight), determined to stroll down to the beach and smoke my last pipe there before going to bed. The door of the inn was locked, no doubt; but, the house standing on the steep slope of the main street, I could step easily on to the edge of the water-barrel beneath my window and lower myself to the ground.

"I did so. Just as I touched solid earth I heard footsteps. They paused suddenly, and, glancing up the moonlit road, I descried the gigantic figure of Wesley Truscott, the coxswain of the lifeboat. He must have seen me, for the light on the whitewashed front of the inn was almost as brilliant as day. But, whatever his business, he had no wish to meet me, for he dodged aside into the shadow of a porch, and after a few seconds I heard him tip-toeing up the hill again.

"I began to have my doubts about Polreen's primitive virtues. Certainly the village, as it lay bathed in moonlight, its whitewashed terraces and glimmering roofs embowered in dark clusters of fuchsia and tamarisk, seemed to harbour nothing but peace and sleeping innocence. An ebbing tide lapped the pebbles on the beach, each pebble distinct and glistening as the water left it. Far in the quiet offing the lights of a fishing-fleet twinkled like a line of jewels through the haze.

"Half-way down the beach I turned for a backward look at the village.

"Now the wall by the lifeboat house looks on the Cove. Its front is turned from the village and the village street, and can only be seen from the beach.

You may imagine my surprise, then, as I turned and found myself face to face with a dozen tall men, standing there upright and silent.

"'Good Heavens!' I cried, 'what is the matter? What brings you all here at this time of night?'

"If I was surprised, they were obviously embarrassed. They drew together a little, as if to avoid observation. But the moon shone full on the wall, affording them not a scrap of shadow.

"For a moment no one answered. Then I heard mutterings, and, as I stepped up, one of the elder men, Archelaus Warne by name, was pushed forward.

"'We wasn' expectin' of you down here,' he stammered, after clearing his throat.

"'No reason why you should,' said I.

"'We done our best to keep out o' your way—never thinkin' you'd be after the boats,'—he nodded towards the boats drawn up on the beach at our feet.

"'I'm afraid I don't understand you in the least.'

"'Well, you see, 'tis a kind o' club.'

"'Indeed?' said I, not in the least enlightened.

"'Iss;' he turned to his companions. 'I s'pose I'd better tell en?' They nodded gravely, and he resumed. 'You see, 'tis this way: ever since that burglary there's no resting for the women. My poor back is blue all over with the cloam my missus takes to bed. And ha'f a dozen times a night 'tis, "*Arch'laus, I'm sartin I hear some person movin'—Arch'laus, fit an' take a light and have a look downstairs, that's a dear!*" An' these fellows 'll tell 'ee 'tis every bit so bad with they. 'Tis right

enough in the daytime, so long as the women got us 'ithin hail, but by night there's no peace nor rest.'

"One or two husbands corroborated.

"'Well, now—I think 'twas the third night after this affair happened — I crep' downstairs for the fifth time or so just to ease the old woman's mind, and opens the door, when what do I see but Billy Polkinghorne here, sittin' on his own doorstep like a lost dog. "Aw," says I, "so thee'rt feelin' of it, too!" "Feelin' of it!" says he, "durned if this isn' the awnly place I can get a wink o' sleep!" "Come'st way long to Wall-end and tetch pipe," says I. Tha's how it began. An' now, ever since Billy thought 'pon the plan of settin' someone, turn an' turn, to watch your window, there's nothin' to hurry us. Why, only just as you came along, Billy was saying, "Burglary!" he says, "why, I han't been so happy in mind since the *Indian Queen* came ashore!"'

"'Watch my window? Why the——' And then, as light broke on me, 'Look here,' I said, 'you don't mean to tell me you've been suspecting *me* of the burglary all this time!'

"'You musn' think,' said Archelaus Warne, 'that we bear any gridge.'

. . . . . .

"Well," the Judge concluded, "as I told you, the thief was apprehended a week or two later, and my innocence established. But, oddly enough, some thirty years after I had to try a case at the Assizes here, in which Archelaus Warne (very old and infirm) appeared as a witness, I recognised

him at once, and, when I sent for him afterwards and inquired after my friends at Polreen, his first words were, 'There now—I wasn' so far wrong, after all! I knawed you must be mixed up with these things, wan way or 'nother.'"

CONCERNING ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM

LET those who know my affection for Troy consider what my feelings were, the other day, when on my return from a brief jaunt to London I alighted at the railway station amid all the tokens of a severe and general catastrophe. The porter who opened the door for me had a bandaged head. George the 'bus driver carried his right arm in a sling, but professed himself able to guide his vehicle through our tortuous streets left-handed. I had declined the offer, and was putting some sympathetic question, when a procession came by. Four children of serious demeanour conveyed a groaning comrade on a stretcher, while a couple more limped after in approved splints. I stopped them, of course. The rearmost sufferer—who wore on his shin-bone a wicker trellis of the sort used for covering flower-plots, and a tourniquet, contrived with a pebble and a handkerchief, about his femoral artery—informed me that it was a case of First Aid to the Injured, which he was rendering at some risk to his own (compound) fracture.

"It's wonderful," said George, with a grin, "what crazes the youngsters will pick up."

Thereupon the truth came out. It appeared

that during my absence a member of the Ambulance Association of St. John of Jerusalem had descended upon the town with a course of lectures, and the town had taken up the novelty with its usual spirit.

I said a course of lectures; but in Troy we are nothing if not thoroughgoing, and by this time (so George informed me) three courses were in full swing. The railway servants and jetty-men (our instructor's earliest pupils) had arrived at restoring animation to the apparently drowned; while a mixed class, drawn from the townsfolk generally, were learning to bandage, and the members of our Young Women's Christian Association had attended but two lectures and still dallied with the wonders of the human frame.

George told me all about it on our way through the town—for I had consented to be driven on condition that he removed his arm from the sling, and he could not deny this to an old friend (as I make free to call myself). Besides, he was bursting to talk. To be sure, he slipped it back for a few moments as we breasted the hill beyond the post-office and his horses dropped to a walk. I fancy that he glanced at me apologetically; but since there was comparatively little danger hereabouts I thought it more delicate to look the other way.

"And the Chamber of Commerce has not protested?" I asked.

We call it the "Chamber of Commerce" for euphony's sake. It is in fact an association which keeps an eye upon the Parish Council, Harbour Board, and Great Western Railway, and incites these bodies to make our town more attractive to visitors.

It consists mainly of lodging-house keepers, and has this summer prevailed on the Railway Company to issue cheap Saturday market tickets to Plymouth—a boon which the visitor will soon learn (if we may take our own experience as a test) to rank high among the minor comforts of life.

No; the Chamber of Commerce had not protested. And yet it occurred to me more than once during the next few days that strangers attracted to Troy by its reputation as a health resort must have marvelled as they walked our streets, where cases of sunstroke, frost-bite, snake-bite, and incipient croup challenged their pity at every corner. The very babies took their first steps in splints, and when they tumbled were examined by their older playmates, and pronounced to be suffering from apoplexy or alcoholic poisoning, as fancy happened to suggest. I believe that a single instruction in the Association's Handbook—carefully italicised there, I must admit — alone saved our rising generation. It ran: "*Unless perfectly sure that the patient is intoxicated, do not give the emetic.*"

To be sure, we left these extravagances to the children. But childhood, after all, is a relative term, and in Troy we pass through it to sober age by nice gradations; which take time. Already a foreign sailor who had committed the double imprudence of drinking heavily at the Crown and Anchor, and falling asleep afterwards on the foreshore while waiting for his boat, was complaining vigorously, through his Vice-Consul, of the varieties of treatment practised upon his insensible body; and only the difficulty of tracing five Esmarch bandages

in a town where five hundred had been sold in a fortnight averted a prosecution. I was even prepared for a visit from Sir Felix Felix-Williams, our worthy Squire, who seldom misses an opportunity of turning our local enthusiasms to account, and sometimes does me the honour to enlist my help; but scarcely for the turn his suggestions took.

"You are, of course, interested in this movement?" he began.

"I have to be, seeing that I live in the midst of it."

"You have joined the Ambulance Class, I hear."

"Do you think I would neglect a precaution so obvious? Until their enthusiasm abates, I certainly shall range myself among the First-Aiders rather than the Injured."

"My idea was, to strike while the iron is hot."

"Oh," said I, "a town with so many in the fire——"

"And I thought, perhaps, if we could manage to connect it in some way with the Primrose League——"

"But what can it have to do with the Primrose League?" I asked stiffly. I will admit now to a slight prejudice against the Ambulance business—due perhaps to the lecturer's having chosen to start it in my absence.

Sir Felix was disappointed, and showed it. "Why, it was you," he reminded me, "who helped us last year by setting the widows to race for a leg of mutton."

"I was a symbolist in those days. And, excuse me, Sir Felix, it was not last year, but the year before.

Last year we had the surrender of Cronje at Paardeberg, with the widows dressed up as Boer women."

"Is that so? I thought we had Cronje two years ago, but no doubt you are right. Now I thought that, with our Primrose fête coming on, and everybody just now taking such an interest in the Empire——"

"To be sure!" I cried. "'First Aid to the Empire'—it will look well on the bills."

Sir Felix rubbed his hands together—a trick of his when he is pleased. "It's an idea, eh?"

"A brilliant one."

"Well, but you haven't heard all." He looked at me almost slyly. "It occurred to me, that while—er—associating this enthusiasm of ours with the imperial idea, we might at the same time do a good turn for ourselves. You think that permissible?"

"Permissible? For what else does an empire exist?"

"Quite so. As I was saying to Lady Williams, only this morning, we must bring *home* to less thoughtful persons a sense of its beneficence. Now it occurs to me: why go on subscribing to these great public Nursing Funds, in which our mite is a mere drop in the ocean, when by sending up a nurse from our own town—she would, of course, be a member of the League—not only should we have the satisfaction of knowing that our help is effective, but the young woman would be earning a salary and supporting herself?"

"Admirable!" said I. "It would look so much better in the papers too."

"You see, we have at this moment a score of young women, all natives of the town and members of the League, undergoing instruction from our lecturer. After the course there will be an examination; and then, with the lecturer's help—and the advice, if I might suggest it, of Lady Williams, who can tell him if the candidate's family be respectable and deserving—we can surely select a young person to do us credit."

. . . . . .

Sir Felix took his departure in the cheerfullest temper, and I record his suggestion as one eminently worthy of his head and his heart, although subsequent events have, alas! brought it to nought. I doubt if we shall send up a nurse from Troy; indeed, I doubt if there will even be an examination.

. . . . . .

Last evening the Young Women's Christian Association attended its sixth Ambulance lecture. The subject—roller bandaging—being a practical one, a small boy was had in, set on the platform, and bandaged in sight of the audience — plain bandaged, reverse bandaged, figure-of-eight bandaged, bandaged on forefinger, thumb, hand, wrist and forearm, elbow, shoulder, knee, ankle, foot. He declares that he enjoyed himself thoroughly. After each demonstration the young women took a turn and practised with such assiduity that an hour slipped pleasantly away. The bandages were applied, the spirals neatly stitched, and the stitches promptly snipped for the next pupil to begin. An occasional prick with the needle evoked no more than a playful remonstrance from the boy and a ripple of laughter

from the fair executants. At length, alas! Miss Sophy Rabling, in snipping her bandage from the boy's foot, fumbled and drove a point of the scissors sharply into his toe.

With a howl he caught at his foot, from which one or two drops of blood were trickling. And the sight of it so affected Miss Sophy that she dropped upon the platform in a swoon. A class-mate in the body of the hall almost instantly followed her example.

The lecturer, I am bound to say, behaved admirably. So far was he from losing his head, that he instantly seized on the accident to turn it to account.

"First aid!" he cried. "Subject: Fainting. Patient No. 1, head to be pressed down below her knees and kept there for a few minutes. Patient No. 2, to be extended on the floor, care being taken to keep head and body level. A form being handy, we could, as an alternative, have hung Patient No. 1 over it, head downwards."

But at this point, unfortunately, the humour of the situation became too much for Miss Gertrude Hansombody, another of the students. She began to titter, went on to laugh uncontrollably, then to clench her hands and sob.

"Subject: Hysterics!" called the lecturer. "Treatment: Be firm with the patient, hold her firmly by the wrists and threaten her with cold water——"

He spoke to empty benches. The rest of his pupils had escaped from the room and were now on their way home, and running for dear life.

I do not expect that St. John of Jerusalem will figure prominently in our Primrose fête. My reason for saying so is an urgent letter just received from Sir Felix, who wishes to confer with me in the course of the day.

COX *VERSUS* PRETYMAN

WE are not litigious in Troy, and we obey the laws of England cheerfully if we sometimes claim to interpret them in our own way. I leave others to determine whether the Chief Constable's decision, that one policeman amply suffices for us, be an effect or a cause, but certain it is that we rarely trouble any court, and almost never that of Assize.

This accounts in part for the popular interest awakened by the suit of Cox *versus* Pretyman, heard a few days ago at the Bodmin Assizes. I say "in part," because the case presented (as the newspapers phrase it) some unusual features, and differed noticeably from the ordinary Action for Breach of Promise. "No harm in that," you will say? Indeed no; and we should have regarded it as no more than our due but for an apprehension that the conduct alleged against the defendant concerned us all by compromising the good name of our town.

At any rate, last Wednesday found the streets full of citizens hurrying to the railway station, and throughout the morning our stationmaster had difficulty in handling the traffic. The journey to Bodmin is not a long one as the crow flies, but, as our carpenter, Mr. Hansombody, put it, "we are not

crows, and, that being the case, naturally resent being packed sixteen in a compartment." Mr. Hansombody taxed the Great Western Company with lack of foresight in not running excursion trains, and appealed to me to support his complaint. I argued (with the general approval of our fellow-travellers) that there was something heartless in the idea of an excursion to listen to the recital of a woman's wrongs, especially of Miss Cox's, whom we had known so long and esteemed. Driven from this position, Mr. Hansombody took a fresh stand on the superiority of the old broad-gauge carriages; and this, since it raised no personal question, we discussed in very good humour while we unpacked and ate our luncheons.

In the midst of our meal a lady at the far end of the compartment heaved a sigh and ejaculated "Poor thing!"—which at once set us off discussing the case anew. We agreed that such conduct as Pretyman's was fortunately rare amongst us. We tried to disclaim him—no easy matter, since his father and mother had been natives of Troy, and he had spent all his life in our midst. The lady in the corner challenged Mr. Hansombody to deny that our town was deteriorating—the rising generation more mischievous than its parents, and given to mitching from school, and cigarette smoking, if not to worse.

Now this was a really damaging attack, for Mr. Hansombody not only presides over our School Board, but has a son in the tobacco business. He met it magnificently. "He would dismiss (he said) the cigarette question as one upon which—Heaven

knew with how little justice!—he might be suspected of private bias; but on the question of truancy he had something to say, and he would say it. To begin with, he would admit that the children in Troy played truant; the percentage of school attendance was abnormally low. Yes, he admitted the fact, and thanked the lady for having called attention to it, since it bore upon the subject now uppermost in our minds. He had here"—and he drew from his pocket a magazine article—"some statistics to which he would invite our attention. They showed the average school attendance in Cornwall to be lower than in any county of England or Wales. *But*"—and Mr. Hansombody raised his forefinger—"the same statistician in the very same paper proves the average of criminal prosecutions in Cornwall to be the lowest in England and Wales."

"And you infer——" I began as he paused triumphantly.

"I infer nothing, sir. I leave the inference to be drawn by our faddists in education, and I only hope they'll enjoy it."

Well, apart from its bearing on Mr. Hansombody's position as Chairman of our Board (which we forbore to examine), this discovery consoled us somewhat and amused us a great deal until we reached Bodmin, when we hurried at once to the Assize Court.

I have said that the action, Cox *v.* Pretyman, was for damages for Breach of Promise of Marriage. Both parties are natives and parishioners of Fowey, and attend the same place of worship. The plaintiff, Miss Rebecca Cox, earns her living as a

dressmaker's assistant; the defendant is our watchmaker, and opened a shop of his own but a few months before approaching Miss Cox with proposals of marriage. This was fifteen years ago. I may mention that some kind of counter-claim was put in "for goods delivered"; the goods in question being a musical-box and sundry small articles for parlour amusement, such as a solitaire-tray, two packs of "Patience" cards, a race-game, and the like. But the defendant did not allege that these had been sent or accepted as whole or partial quittance of his contract to marry, and I can only suppose that he pleaded them in mitigation of damages. Miss Cox asked for one hundred and fifty pounds.

Her evidence was given in quiet but resolute tones, and for some time disclosed nothing sensational. The circumstances in which Mr. Pretyman had sued for and obtained the promise of her hand differed in no important particular from those which ordinarily attend the *fiançailles* of respectable young persons in Troy; and for twelve years his courtship ran an even course. "After this," asserted Miss Cox, "his attentions cooled. He was friendly and kind enough when we met, and still talked of enlarging his shop-front and marrying in the near future. But his visits were not frequent enough to be called courting." Of late, though living in the same street, she had only seen him on Sundays; and even so he would be occupied almost all the day and evening with services, Sunday school, prayer-meetings, and occasional addresses. At length she taxed him with indifference, and, finding his excuses unsatisfactory, was persuaded by her

friends to bring the present action. She liked the man well enough; but for the last two or three years "his heart hadn't been in it. He didn't do any proper courting."

Defendant's counsel (a young man) attempted in cross-examination to lead Miss Cox to reveal herself as an exacting young woman.

"Do you assert that at length you came to see nothing of defendant during the week?"

"Only through the shop window as I went by to my work. And of late, when he saw me coming, he would screw a magnifying glass in his eye and pretend to be busy with his watch-making. I believe he did it to avoid looking at me, and also because he knew I couldn't bear him with his face screwed up. It makes such a difference to his appearance."

"Gently, gently, Miss Cox! You must not give us your mere suppositions. Now, did he never pay you a visit, or take you for a walk, say on Wednesdays? That would be early-closing day, I believe."

"Never for the last three years, sir, after he became a Freemason. Wednesdays was lodge-night."

"Well then, on Saturday, after shop hours?"

"Yes, he used to come on Saturdays, till he was made a Forester. The Foresters meet every Saturday evening."

"Mondays then, or Tuesdays? We haven't exhausted the week yet, Miss Cox."

"No, sir. Mondays he was a Rechabite and went to tent. Tuesdays he would be an Ancient Druid——"

"Gently! On Mondays, you say, he was a Rechabite and went to tent. What is a Rechabite? And what does he do in a tent?"

Plaintiff (dissolving in tears): "Ah, sir, if I only knew!"

Here the Judge interposed. A Rechabite, he believed, went to a tent, or habitation, for the purpose (among others) of abstaining from alcoholic drinks.

Plaintiff (briskly): "But, my lord, you wouldn't call that proper courting!"

Defendant's counsel had taken this opportunity to resume his seat. But counsel for the plaintiff now arose, with a smile, to re-examine.

"Did Mr. Pretyman walk out with you on Thursday evenings?"

"Oh no, sir. On Thursday evenings Mr. Pretyman was an Oddfellow."

"I think we have only to account for Fridays," said his lordship, after consulting his notes.

"On Fridays, my lord, Mr. Pretyman was an Ancient Buffalo."

"An Ancient Buffalo?"

"Yes, my lord (sobbing). I don't know what it means, but that was the last straw."

. . . . . .

"The first question for the jury to determine," said his lordship, a little later, "is whether an affianced young woman, as such, has a right to expect from her betrothed such attentions as may reasonably be taken as earnest of his desire to fulfil his contract within a reasonable time. In the present instance, the fact that the contract was made does not stand in doubt; it is not disputed. Now arises a second

question. Can a man who is on weekdays a Freemason, a Rechabite, an Oddfellow, a Forester, an Ancient Druid, and an Ancient Buffalo, and on Sundays (as I gather) a Yarmouth Bloater——"

"Plymouth Brother, my lord," plaintiff's counsel corrected.

"I beg your pardon—a Plymouth Brother. I say, can a man who after his betrothal voluntarily preoccupies himself with these multifarious functions be held—I will not say to have disqualified himself for that willing exchange of confidence which is the surest guarantee of lasting happiness between man and wife—but to have raised such obstacles to the fulfilment of the original contract as reasonably warrant the accusation of *mala fides*?"

Well, the jury held that he could; for without troubling to leave the box they gave their verdict for the plaintiff, and assessed the damages at one hundred pounds.

Towards the close of the case we all felt ashamed of Pretyman. His defence had been weak; it struck us as almost derisory; and Mr. Hansombody agreed with me in a whisper that under similar circumstances he or I could have made a better fight for it. The fellow had shown no sport. We blushed for our town.

But Troy has a knack of winning its races on the post. Judgment, as the phrase goes, was on the point of being entered accordingly, when the defendant looked up towards the Bench with a sudden, happy smile.

"Here, wait a minute!" he said. "I have a question to put to his lordship."

"Eh?" said the Judge. "Certainly. What is it?"

"I want to know, my lord, if I can claim the benefit of the First Offenders Act?"

. . . . . .

The train on the return journey was worse crowded than ever; but nobody minded. For we had managed to give plaintiff and defendant a compartment to themselves.

THE BRIDALS OF YSSELMONDE

WHEN the Grand Duke Ferdinand of Carinthia travelled in state to wed the Princess Sophia of Ysselmonde, he did so by land, and for two reasons; the first being that this was the shortest way, and the second that he possessed no ships. These, at any rate, were the reasons alleged by his Chancellor, to whom he left all arrangements. For himself, he took very little interest in the marriage beyond inquiring the age of his bride. "Six years," was the answer, and this seemed to him very young, for he had already passed his tenth birthday.

The Pope, however, had contrived and blessed the match; so Ferdinand raised no serious objection, but in due course came to Ysselmonde with his bodyguard of the famous Green Carinthian Archers, and two hundred halberdiers and twelve waggons—four to carry his wardrobe, and the remaining eight piled with wedding presents. On the way, while Ferdinand looked for birds' nests, the Chancellor sang the praises of the Princess Sophia, who (he declared) was more beautiful than the day. "But you have never seen her," objected Ferdinand. "No, your Highness, and that is why I contented myself with a purely conventional phrase;" and the Chan-

cellor, who practised *finesse* in his odd moments, began to talk of the sea, the sight of which awaited them at Ysselmonde. "And what is the sea like?" "Well, your Highness, the sea is somewhat difficult to describe, for in fact there is nothing to compare with it." "You have seen it, I suppose?" "Sire, I have done more; for once, while serving as Ambassador at Venice, I had the honour to be upset in it."

With such converse they beguiled the road until they reached Ysselmonde, and found the sea completely hidden by flags and triumphal arches. And there, after three days' feasting, the little Grand Duke and the still smaller Princess were married in the Cathedral by the Cardinal Archbishop, and the Pope's legate handed them his master's blessing in a morocco-covered case, and as they drove back to the Palace the Dutchmen waved their hats and shouted "Boo-mp!" but the Carinthian Archers cried "Talassio!" which not only sounded better, but proved (when they obligingly explained what it meant) that the ancestors of the Grand Duke of Carinthia had lived in Rome long before any Pope.

On reaching the Palace the bride and bridegroom were taken to a gilded drawing-room, and there left to talk together, while the guests filled up the time before the banquet by admiring the presents and calculating their cost. Ferdinand said, "Well, *that's* over;" and the Princess said, "Yes,"—for this was their first opportunity of conversing alone.

"You're a great deal better than I expected,"

said Ferdinand reassuringly. Indeed, in her straight dress sewn with seed-pearls and her coif of Dutch lace surmounted with a little crown of diamonds, the Princess looked quite beautiful; and he in his white satin suit, crossed with the blue ribbon of St. John Nepomuc, was the handsomest boy she had ever seen. "Besides," he added, "my Chancellor says you are hereditary High Admiral of the Ocean—it's in the marriage settlement; and that would make up for a lot. Where is it?"

"The Ocean?" She felt very shy still. "I have never seen it, but I believe it's somewhere at the bottom of the garden."

"Suppose we go and have a look at it?"

She was about to say that she must ask leave of her governess, but he looked so masterful and independent that she hadn't the courage. It gave her quite a thrill as he took her hand and led her out through the low window to the great stone terrace. They passed down the terrace steps into a garden ablaze with tulip beds in geometrical patterns; at the foot ran a yew hedge, and beyond it, in a side-walk, they came upon a scullion boy chasing a sulphur-yellow butterfly. The Grand Duke forgot his fine manners, and dropped his bride's hand to join in the chase; but the boy no sooner caught sight of him than he fled with a cry of dismay and popped into an arbour. There, a minute later, the bride and bridegroom found him stooping over a churn and stirring with might and main.

"What are you stirring, boy?" asked Ferdinand.

"Praised be the Virgin!" said the boy, "I *believe* it's an ice-pudding for the banquet. But they

shouldn't have put the ice-puddings in the same arbour as the fireworks; for, if your Highness will allow me to say so, you can't expect old heads on young shoulders."

"Are the fireworks in our honour too?"

"Why, of course," the scullion answered; "everything is in your honour to-day."

This simplified matters wonderfully. The children passed on through a gate in the garden wall and came upon a clearing beside a woodstack; and there stood a caravan with its shafts in the air. A woman sat on the tilt at the back, reading, and every now and then glancing towards two men engaged in deadly combat in the middle of the clearing, who shouted as they thrust at one another with long swords.

The little Princess, who, except when driven in her state-coach to the Cathedral, had never before strayed outside the garden, turned very pale and caught at her husband's hand. But he stepped forward boldly.

"Now yield thee, caitiff, or thine hour has come!" shouted one of the fighters and flourished his blade.

"Sooner I'll die than tum te tum te tum!" the other answered quite as fiercely.

"Slave of thine become," said the woman from the caravan.

"Thank you. Sooner I'll die than slave of thine become!" He laid about him with fresh vigour.

"Put down your swords," commanded Ferdinand. "And now tell me who you are."

"We are Valentine and Orson," they answered.

"Indeed?" Ferdinand had heard of them, and shook hands affably. "Then I'm very glad to make your acquaintance."

"And," said they, "we are rehearsing for the performance at the Palace to-night in your Highnesses' honour."

"Oh, so this is in our honour too?"

"To be sure," said the woman; "and I am to dress up as Hymen and speak the Epilogue in a saffron robe. It has some good lines; for instance—

> 'Ye Loves and Genial Hours, conspire
> To gratify this Royal Pair
> With Sons impetuous as their Sire,
> And Daughters as their Mother fair!'"

"Thank you," said Ferdinand. "But we are very busy to-day and must take one thing at a time. Can you tell us the way to the sea, please?"

The woman pointed along a path which led to a moss-covered gate and an orchard where the apple-blossom piled itself in pink clouds against the blue sky: as they followed the path they heard her laughing, and looked back to see her still staring after them and laughing merrily, while Valentine and Orson leaned on their swords and laughed too.

The orchard was the prettiest in the whole world. Blackbirds played hide-and-seek beneath the boughs, blue and white violets hid in the tall grass around the boles, and the spaces between were carpeted with daisies to the edge of a streamlet. Over the streamlet sang thrushes and goldfinches and bullfinches innumerable, and their voices shook down the blossom like a fall of pink snow, which threatened to cover even the daisies. The Grand Duke

and the Princess believed that all this beauty was in their honour, no less than the chorus of the bells floating across the tree-tops from the city.

"This is the best of all," said Ferdinand as they seated themselves by the stream. "I had no idea marriage was such fun. And they haven't even forgotten the trout!" he cried, peering over the brink.

"Can you make daisy-chains?" asked the Princess timidly.

He could not; so she taught him, feeling secretly proud that there was something he could learn of her. When the chain was finished he flung it over his neck and kissed her. "Though I don't like kissing, as a rule," he explained.

"And this shall be my wedding present," said she.

"Why, I brought you six waggon-loads!—beauties—all chosen by my Chancellor."

"But he didn't make or choose this one," said Sophia, "and I like this one best." They sat silent for a moment. "Dear me," she sighed, "what a lot we have to learn of each other's ways!"

"Hullo!" Ferdinand was staring down the glade. "What's that line at the end there, across the sky?"

Sophia turned. "I think that's the sea—yes, there is a ship upon it."

"But why have they hung a blue cloth in front of it?"

"I expect that's in our honour too."

They took hands and trotted to the end of the orchard; and there, beyond the hedge, ran a canal, and beyond the canal a wide flat country stretched

away to the sea,—a land dotted with windmills and cattle and red-and-white houses with weathercocks,—a land, too, criss-crossed with canals, whereon dozens of boats, and even some large ships, threaded their way like dancers in and out of the groups of cattle, or sailed past a house so closely as almost to poke a bowsprit through the front door. The weathercocks spun and glittered, the windmills waved their arms, the boats bowed and curtseyed to the children. Never was such a salutation. Even the blue cloth in the distance twinkled, and Ferdinand saw at a glance that it was embroidered with silver.

But the finest flash of all came from a barge moored in the canal just below them, where a middle-aged woman sat scouring a copper pan.

"Good-day!" cried Ferdinand across the hedge. "Why are you doing that?"

"Why, in honour of the wedding, to be sure. 'Must show one's best at such times, if only for one's own satisfaction." Then, as he climbed into view and helped Sophia over the hedge, she recognised them, and, dropping her pan with a clatter, called on the saints to bless them and keep them always. The bridal pair clambered down to the towpath, and from the towpath to her cabin, where she fed them (for they were hungry by this time) with bread and honey from a marvellous cupboard painted all over with tulips: in short, they enjoyed themselves immensely.

"Only," said Ferdinand, "I wish they hadn't covered up the sea, for I wanted a good look at it."

"The sea?" said the barge-woman, all of a shiver. Then she explained that her two sons had

been drowned in it. "Though, to be sure," said she, "they died for your Majesty's honour, and, if God should give them back to me, would do so again."

"For me?" exclaimed Sophia, opening her eyes very wide.

"Ay, to be sure, my dear. So it's no wonder—eh?—that I should love you."

. . . . . .

By the time they said good-bye to her and hurried back through the orchard, a dew was gathering on the grass and a young moon had poised herself above the apple-boughs. The birds here were silent; but high on the stone terrace, when they reached it, a solitary one began to sing. From the bright windows facing the terrace came the clatter of plates and glasses, with loud outbursts of laughter. But this bird had chosen his station beneath a dark window at the corner, and sang there unseen. It was the nightingale.

They could not understand what he sang. "It is my window," whispered Sophia, and began to weep in the darkness, without knowing why; for she was not miserable in the least, but, on the contrary, very, very happy. They listened, hand in hand, by a fountain on the terrace. Through the windows they could see the Papal legate chatting at table with the King, Sophia's father, and the Chancellor hobnobbing with the Cardinal Archbishop. Only the Queen of Ysselmonde sat at the table with her wrists on the arms of her throne and her eyes looking out into the darkness, as though she caught some whisper of the bird's song. But the children knew that he sang for them, not for her;

for he told of all the adventures of the day, and he told not as I am telling them, but so beautifully that the heart ached to hear. Yet his song was of two words only. "Young—young—young! Love love—love!"—the same words over and over.

A courtier came staggering out from the banqueting-hall, and the bird flew away. The children standing by the fountain watched him as he found the water and dipped his face in it, with a groan. He was exceedingly drunk; but as he lifted his head he caught sight of them in the moonlight and excused himself.

"In your Highnesses' honour," he assured them: "'been doing my best."

"Poor man!" said Sophia. "But how loyal!"

ENGLAND!

AT Madeira seven of us were added to the first-class passengers of the *Cambuscan*, homeward bound from Cape Town; and even so the company made a poor muster in the saloon, which required a hundred and seventy feet of hurricane-deck for covering. Those were days—long before the South African War, before the Jameson Raid even—when every ship carried out a load of miners for the Transvaal, and returned comparatively empty, though as a rule with plenty of obviously rich men and be-diamonded ladies.

But every tide has its backwash; and it so happened that the *Cambuscan* held as many second and third-class passengers as she could stow. They were—their general air proclaimed it—the failures of South African immigration; men and women who had gone out too early and given up the struggle just when the propitious moment arrived. Seediness marked the second-class; the third-class came from all parts, from the Cape to Pietermaritzburg, but they might have conspired to assemble on the *Cambuscan* as a protest against high hopes and dreams of a promised land. The protest, let me add, was an entirely passive one. They stood aloof, watching the flashy gaieties of

the hurricane-deck from their own sad penumbra —a dejected, wistful, whispering throng. "They simply don't occur," one of the be-diamonded ladies remarked to me, and went on to praise the U—— Line for arranging it so. With nightfall—or a trifle later—they vanished; and at most, when the time came for my last pipe before turning in, two or three figures would be left pacing there forward, pacing and turning and pacing again. I wondered who these figures were, and what their thoughts. They and the sleepers hived beneath them belonged to another world—a world driven with ours through wave and darkness, urged by the same propellers, controlled by the same helmsman, separated only by thin partitions which the touch of a rock would tear down like paper; yet, while the partitions stood, separated as no city separates its rich and poor. Only on Sundays did these two worlds consent to meet. They had, it appeared, a common God, and joined for a few minutes once a week in worshipping Him.

The be-diamonded lady, however, was not quite accurate. Once, and once only—it was the second day out from Madeira—the third-class passengers did "occur," to the extent of organising athletic sports, and even (with the captain's leave) of levying prize-money from the saloon-deck. Some four or five of us, when their delegate approached, were lounging beneath the great awning and listening, or pretending to listen, to the discourse of our only millionaire, Mr. Olstein. As usual, he recited his wrongs; and, as usual, the mere recital caused him to perspire. The hairs on the back of his ex-

postulatory hand bristled with indignation, the diamonds on his fingers flashed with it. We had known him but two days and were passing weary of him, but allowed him to talk. He apostrophised the British Flag—his final Court of Appeal, he termed it—while we stared out over the waters.

"We love it," he insisted. "We never see it without a lump in our throats. But we ask ourselves, How long is this affection to count for nothing? What are we to get in return?"

No one answered, perhaps because no one knew. My thoughts had flown forward to a small river-side church in England, and a memorial window to one whose body had been found after Isandlwhana with the same flag wrapped around it beneath the tunic. This was *his* reward.

"Hey? What's this?" Mr. Olstein took the subscription list, fitted his gold-rimmed glasses and eyed the delegate over the paper. "Athletic sports? Not much in your line, I should say."

"No, sir;" and while the delegate bent his eyes a bright spot showed on either cheek. He was a weedy, hollow-chested man, about six feet in height, with tell-tale pits at the back of the neck, and a ragged beard evidently grown on the voyage. "I'm only a collector, with the captain's permission."

"I see." Mr. Olstein pulled out a sovereign. "I don't put this on *you*, mind; I can tell a consumptive with half an eye. See here"—he appealed to us—"this is just what we suffer from. You fellows with lung trouble flock to a tepid hole like Madeira, while the Cape would cure you

in half the time: why, the voyage itself only begins to be decent after you get south! But you won't see it; and the people who *do* see it are just the sort who don't pay us when they come, and damage us when they go back,—hard cases, sent out to pick up a living as well as their health, who get stranded and hurry home half-cured."

A young Briton in the deck-chair next to mine rose and walked off abruptly, while I fumbled for a coin, ashamed to meet the collector's eye.

"Hullo!" Mr. Olstein grinned at me. "Our friend's in a hurry to dodge the subscription list."

But the young Briton turned and intercepted the collector as he moved towards the next group.

"It's *your* sovereign," said I, "that seems to be overlooked."

Mr. Olstein saw it at his elbow and re-pocketed it. "Well, if he hasn't the sense to pick it up, I've some more than to whistle him back. But that'll show you the sort of fool we send out to compete with Germans and suchlike. It's enough to make a man ashamed of his country."

This happened on a Saturday morning, and in the afternoon we attended the sports—a depressing ceremony. The performers went through their contests, so to speak, with bated breath and a self-consciousness which, try as we might, poisoned our applause and made it insufferably patronising. Their backers would pluck up heart and encourage them loudly with Whitechapel catch-words, and anon would hush their voices in uneasy shame. Our collector, brave by fits in his dignity as steward,

would catch the eye of a saloon-deck passenger and shrink behind the enormous rosette which some wag had pinned upon him.

Next day I made an opportunity to speak with him, after service. It needed no pressing to extract his story, and he told it with entire simplicity. He was a Cockney, and by trade had been a baker in Bermondsey. "A wearing trade," he said. "The most of us die before forty. You'd be surprised." But he had started with a sound constitution, and somehow persuaded himself, in spite of warnings, that he was immune. At thirty-two he had married. "A deal later than most," he explained—and had scarcely been married three months before lung trouble declared itself. "I had a few pounds put by, having married so late; and it seemed a duty to Emily to give myself every chance: so we packed up almost at once and started for South Africa. It was a wrench to her, but the voyage out did us both all the good in the world, she being in a delicate state of health, and the room in Bermondsey not fit for a woman in that condition." The baby was born in Cape Town, five months after their landing. "But they've no employment for bakers out there," he assured me. "We found trade very low altogether, and what I picked up wasn't any healthier than in London. Emily disliked the place, too; though she'd have stayed gladly if it had been doing me any good. And so back we're going. There's one thing: I'm safe of work. My old employer in Bermondsey has promised that all right. And the child, you see, sir, won't suffer. There's no consumption, that I know of, in either

of our families; and Emily, you may be sure, will see he's not brought up to be a baker."

He announced it in the most matter-of-fact way. He was going back to England to die—to die speedily—and he knew it. "I should like you to see our baby, sir," he added. "He weighs extraordinary, for his age. My wife comes from the North of England—a very big-boned family; and he's British, every ounce of him, though he *was* born in South Africa."

But the wife took a chill on entering the Bay, and remained below with the child; nor was it until the day we sighted England that I saw the whole family together.

. . . . . .

We were to pick up the Eddystone; and as this was calculated to happen at sunset, or a little after, the usual sweepstake on the saloon-deck aroused a little more than the usual excitement. For the first glimpse, whether of lighthouse or light, would give the prize to the nearest guesser. If we anticipated sunset, the clearness of the weather would decide between two pretty close shots: if we ran it fine, the lamp (which carries for seventeen miles and more) might upset those who staked on daylight even at that distance from the mark. Our guesses had been tabulated, and the paper pinned up in the smoking-room.

They allowed a margin of some twenty-five knots on the twenty-four hours' run—ranging, as nearly as I can recollect, from three hundred and thirty-five to three hundred and sixty; and the date being the last week of March, and sunset falling close on half-

past six, a whole nebula of guesses surrounded that hour, one or two divided only by a few seconds.

A strong head-wind met us in the Channel, and the backers of daylight had almost given up hope; but it dropped in the late afternoon, and by the log we were evidently in for a close finish. Mr. Olstein had set his watch by the ship's chronometer, and consulted it from minute to minute. He stood by me, binocular in hand, and grew paler with excitement as sunset drew on and the minutes scored off the guesses one by one from the list. His guess was among the last, but not actually the last by half a dozen.

We had reached a point when five minutes disposed of no less than nine guesses. The weather was dull: no one could tell precisely if the sun had sunk or not. We were certainly within twenty miles of the rock, and by the Nautical Almanack, unless our chronometer erred, the light ought to flash out within sixty seconds. If within forty the man sang out from the crow's-nest, Mr. Olstein would lose; after forty he had a whole minute and a half for a clear win.

The forty seconds passed. Mr. Olstein drew a long breath of relief. "But why the devil don't they light up?" he demanded after a moment. "I call you to witness what the time is by our chronometer. I'll have it tested as soon as I step ashore, and if it's wrong I'll complain to the Company; if it's not, I'll send the Trinity House a letter 'll lay those lighthouse fellows by the heels! Punctuality, sir, in the case of shipping—life or death——"

The cry of the man in the crow's-nest mingled with ours as a spark touched the north-eastern horizon almost ahead of us—trembled and died—shone out, as it seemed, more steadily—and again was quenched.

Mr. Olstein slapped his thigh. He had won something like ten pounds and was a joyous millionaire. "That makes twice in four voyages," he proclaimed.

I congratulated him and strode forward. A group of third-class passengers had gathered by the starboard bow. They, too, had heard the cry. To all appearance they might have been an ordinary Whitechapel crowd, and even now they scarcely lifted their voices; but they whispered and pointed.

"The Eddystone!"

I singled out my friend the baker. Before I could reach him he had broken from the group. I hailed him. Without seeming to hear, he disappeared down the fore-companion. But by and by he emerged again, and with a baby in his arms. Evidently he had torn it from its cot. His wife followed, weak and protesting.

The child, too, raised a wail of querulous protest; but he hugged it to him, and running to the ship's side held it aloft.

"England, baby!"

It turned its head, seeking the pillow or its mother; and would not look, but broke into fresh and louder wailing.

"England!"

He hugged it afresh. God knows of what feeling sprang the tears that fell on its face and baptized

it. But he hushed his voice, and, lifting the child again, coaxed it to look — coaxed it with tears streaming now, and with a thrill that would not be denied—

"England, baby—England!"

JOHN AND THE GHOSTS

IN the kingdom of Illyria there lived, not long ago, a poor wood-cutter with three sons, who in time went forth to seek their fortunes. At the end of three years they returned by agreement, to compare their progress in the world. The eldest had become a lawyer, and the second a merchant, and each of these had won riches and friends; but John, the youngest, who had enlisted in the army, could only show a cork leg and a medal.

"You have made a bad business of it," said his brothers. "Your medal is worthless except to a collector of such things, and your leg a positive disadvantage. Fortunately we have influence, and since you are our brother we must see what we can do for you."

Now the King of Illyria lived at that time in his capital, in a brick palace at the end of the great park. He kept this park open to all, and allowed no one to build in it. But the richest citizens, who were so fond of their ruler that they could not live out of his sight, had their houses just beyond the park, in the rear of the Palace, on a piece of ground which they called Palace Gardens. The name was a little misleading, for the true gardens lay in front of the Palace, where children of all classes played

among the trees and flower-beds and artificial ponds, and the King sat and watched them, because he took delight in children, and because the sight of them cheered his only daughter, who had fallen into a deep melancholy. But the rich citizens clung to it, for it gave a pleasant neighbourly air to their roadway, and showed what friendliness there was between the monarch of Illyria and his people.

At either end you entered the roadway (if you were allowed) by an iron gate, and each gate had a sentry-box beside it, and a tall beadle, and a notice-board to save him the trouble of explanation. The notice ran—

> PRIVATE.—*The Beadle has orders to refuse admittance to all Waggons, Tradesmen's Carts, Hackney Coaches, Donkeys, Beggars, Disorderly Characters, or Persons carrying Burdens.*

A sedentary life had told so severely upon one of the two beadles that he could no longer enter his box with dignity or read his newspaper there with any comfort. He resigned, and John obtained the post by his brothers' interest, in spite of his cork leg.

He had now a bright green suit with scarlet pipings, a gold-laced hat, a fashionable address, and very little to do. But the army had taught him to be active, and for lack of anything better he fell into deep thinking. This came near to bringing him into trouble. One evening he looked out of his sentry-box and saw a mild and somewhat sad-featured old gentleman approaching the gate.

"No admittance," said John.

"Tut, tut!" said the old gentleman. "I'm the King."

John looked at the face on his medal, and sure enough there was a resemblance. "But, all the same, your Majesty carries a burden,"—here he pointed to the notice-board,—"and the folks along this road are mighty particular."

The King smiled and then sighed heavily.

"It's about the Princess, my daughter," said he; "she has not smiled for a whole year."

"I'll warrant I'd make her," said John.

"I'll warrant you could not," said the King. "She will never smile again until she is married."

"Then," answered John, "speaking in a humble way, as becomes me, why the dickens alive don't you marry her up and get done with it?"

The King shook his head.

"There's a condition attached," said he. "Maybe you have heard of the famous haunted house in Puns'nby Square?"

"I've always gone by the spelling, and pronounced it Ponsonby," said John.

"Well, the condition is that every suitor for my daughter's hand must spend a night alone in that house; and if he survives and is ready to persevere with his wooing, he must return a year later with his bride and spend the night of his marriage there."

"And very handy," said John, "for there's a wedding-cake shop at the corner."

The King sighed again.

"Unhappily, none survive. One hundred and fifty-five have undertaken the adventure, and not a man of them but has either lost his wits or run for it."

"Well," said John, "I've been afraid of a great many men——"

"That's a poor confession for a soldier," put in the King.

"—when they all happened to come at me together. But I've never yet met the ghost that could frighten me; and if your Majesty will give me the latch-key I'll try my luck this very night."

It could not be done in this free-and-easy way; but at eight o'clock, after John had visited the Palace and taken an oath in the Princess's presence (which was his first sight of her), he was driven down to the house beside the Lord Chamberlain, who admitted him to the black front hall, and, slamming the door upon him, scuttled out of the porch as quickly as possible and into his brougham.

John struck a match, and as he did so heard the carriage roll away. The walls were bare, and the floor and great staircase ahead of him carpetless. As the match flickered out he caught a glimpse of a pair of feet moving up the stairs; that was all—only feet.

"I'll catch up with the calves on the landing, maybe," said he; and, striking another match, he followed them up.

The feet turned aside on the landing and led him into a room on the right. He paused on the threshold, drew a candle from his pocket, lit it, and stared about him. The room was of great size, bare and dusty, with crimson hangings, gilt panels, and one huge gilt chandelier, from which and from the ceiling and cornice long cobwebs trailed down like creeping plants. Beneath the chandelier a dark

smear ran along the boards. The feet crossed it towards the fireplace; and as they did so, John saw them stained with blood. They reached the fireplace and vanished.

Scarcely had this happened, before the end of the room opposite the window began to glow with an unearthly light. John, whose poverty had taught him to be economical, promptly blew out his candle. A moment later two men entered, bearing a coffin between them. They rested it upon the floor and, seating themselves upon it, began to cast dice. "Your soul!" "My soul!" they kept saying in hollow tones, according as they won or lost. At length one of them—a tall man in a powdered wig, with a face extraordinarily pale—flung a hand to his brow, rose and staggered from the room. The other sat waiting and twirling his black moustache, with an evil smile. John, who by this time had found a seat in a far corner, thought him the most poisonous-looking villain he had ever seen; but as the minutes passed and nothing happened, he turned his back to the light and pulled out a penny-dreadful. His literary taste was shocking, and when it came to romance he liked the incidents to follow one another with great rapidity.

He was interrupted by a blood-curdling groan, and the first ruffian broke into the room, dragging by its grey locks the body of an old man. A young girl followed, weeping and protesting, with dishevelled hair, and behind her entered a priest with a brazier full of glowing charcoal. The girl cast herself forward on the old man's body, but the two scoundrels dragged her from it by force. "The

money!" demanded the dark one; and she drew from her bosom a small key and cast it at his feet. "My promise!" demanded the other, and seized her by the wrist as the priest stepped forward. "Quick! over this coffin—man and wife!" She wrenched her hand away and thrust him backward. The priest retreated to the brazier and drew out a red-hot iron.

John thought it about time to interfere.

"I beg your pardon," said he, stepping forward; "but I suppose you really *are* ghosts?"

"We are unhallowed souls," answered the dark man impressively, "who return to blight the living with the spectacle of our awful crimes."

"Meaning me?" asked John.

"Ay, sir; and to destroy you to-night if you contract not, upon your soul, to return with your bride and meet us here a twelvemonth hence."

"H'm!" said John to himself, "they are three to one; and, after all, it's what I came for. I suppose," he added aloud, "some form of document is usual in these cases?"

The dark man drew out pen and parchment.

"Hold forth your hand," he commanded; and as John held it out, thinking he meant to shake it over the bargain, the fellow drove the pen into his wrist until the blood spurted. "Now sign!"

"Sign!" said the other villain.

"Sign!" said the lady.

"Oh, very well, miss. If you're in the swindle too, my mind is easier," said John, and signed his name with a flourish. "But a bargain is a bargain, and what security have I for your part in it?"

"Our signature!" said the priest terribly, at the

same moment pressing his branding-iron into John's ankle. A smell of burnt cork arose as John stooped and clapped his hand over the scorched stocking. When he looked up again his visitors had vanished; and a moment later the strange light, too, died away.

But the coffin remained for evidence that he had not been dreaming. John lit a candle and examined it.

"Just the thing for me," he exclaimed, finding it to be a mere shell of pine-boards, loosely nailed together and painted black. "I was beginning to shiver." He knocked the coffin to pieces, crammed them into the fireplace, and very soon had a grand fire blazing, before which he sat and finished his penny-dreadful, and so dropped off into a sound sleep.

The Lord Chamberlain arrived early in the morning, and, finding him stretched there, at first broke into lamentations over the fate of yet another personable young man; but soon changed his tune when John sat up, and, rubbing his eyes, demanded to be told the time.

"But are you really alive? We must drive back and tell his Majesty at once!"

"Stay a moment," said John. "There's a brother of mine, a lawyer, in the city. He will be arriving at his office about this time, and you must drive me there; for I have a document here of a sort, and must have it stamped, to be on the safe side."

So into the city he was driven beside the Lord Chamberlain, and there had his leg stamped and filed for reference; and, having purchased another,

was conveyed to the Palace, where the King received him with open arms.

He was now a favoured guest at Court, and had frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with the Princess, with whom he soon fell deeply in love. But as the months passed and the time drew near for their marriage, he grew silent and thoughtful, for he feared to expose her, even in his company, to the sights he had witnessed in the haunted house.

He thought and thought, until one fine afternoon he snapped his fingers suddenly, and after that went about whistling. A fortnight before the day fixed for the wedding he drove into the city again—but this time to the office of his other brother, the merchant.

"I want," he said, "a loan of a thousand pounds."

"Nothing easier," said his brother. "Here are eight hundred and fifty. Of the remainder I shall keep fifty as interest for the first year at five per cent., and the odd hundred should purchase a premium of insurance for two thousand pounds, which I will retain as security against accidents."

This seemed not only fair but brotherly. John pocketed his eight hundred and fifty pounds, shook his creditor affectionately by the hand, and hurried westward.

. . . . . .

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp; and in the evening the King, who had been shedding tears at intervals throughout the ceremonies, accompanied his daughter to the haunted house. The Princess was pale. John, on the contrary, who sat facing her father in the state-coach, smiled with a cheerfulness which, under the circumstances, seemed

a trifle ill-bred. The wedding-guests followed in twenty-four chariots. Their cards of invitation had said "Two to five-thirty p.m.," and it was now eight o'clock; but they could not resist the temptation to see the last of "the poor dear thing," as they agreed to call the bride.

The King sat silent during the drive; he was preparing his farewell speech, which he meant to deliver in the porch. But arriving and perceiving a crowd about it, and also, to his vast astonishment, a red baize carpet on the perron, and a butler bowing in the doorway with two footmen behind him, he coughed down his exordium, and led his daughter into the hall amid showers of rice and confetti. The bridegroom followed; and so did the wedding-guests, since no one opposed them.

The hall and staircase were decorated with palms and pot-plants, flags and emblems of Illyria; and in the great drawing-room—which they entered while John persuaded the King to a seat—they found many rows of morocco-covered chairs, a miniature stage with a drop representing the play-scene in *Hamlet*, a row of footlights, a boudoir-grand piano, and a man seated at the keyboard whom they recognised as a performer in much demand at suburban dances.

The company had scarcely seated itself, before a strange light began to illuminate that end of the room at which the stage stood, and immediately the curtain rose to the overture of M. Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers*, the pianist continuing with great spirit until a round of applause greeted the entrance of the two spectral performers.

Its effect upon them was in the highest degree

disconcerting. They set down the coffin, and, after a brief and hurried conference in an undertone, the black-mustachioed ghost advanced to the footlights, singled out John from the audience, and with a terrific scowl demanded to know the reason of this extraordinary gathering.

"Come, come, my dear sir," answered John, "our contract, if you will study it, allows me to invite whom I choose; it merely insists that my bride and I must be present, as you see we are. Pray go on with your part, and assure yourself it is no use to try the high horse with me."

The dark ghost looked at his partner, who shuffled uneasily.

"I told you," said he, "we should have trouble with this fellow. I had a presentiment of it when he came to spend the night here without bringing a bull-dog. That frightening of the bull-dog out of his wits has always been our most effective bit of business."

Hereupon the dark ghost took another tone.

"Our fair but unfortunate victim has a sore throat to-night," he announced. "The performance is consequently postponed;" and he seated himself sulkily upon the coffin, when the limelight-man from the wings promptly bathed him in a flood of the most beautiful rose-colour. "Oh, this is intolerable!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

"It is not first-rate, I agree," said John, "but, such as it is, we had better go through with it. Should the company doubt its genuineness, I can go around afterwards and show the brand on the cork." Here he tapped the leg, which he had been careful to bring with him.

Before this evidence of contract the ghosts' resistance collapsed. They seated themselves on the coffin and began the casting of dice; the performance proceeded, but in a half-hearted and perfunctory manner, notwithstanding the vivacious efforts of the limelight-man.

The tall ghost struck his brow and fled from the stage. There were cries of "Call him back!" But John explained that this was part of the drama, and no encores would be allowed; whereupon the audience fell to hissing the villain, who now sat alone with the most lifelike expression of malignity.

"Oh, hang it!" he expostulated after a while, "I am doing this under protest, and you need not make it worse for a fellow. I draw the line at hissing."

"It's the usual thing," explained John affably.

But when the ghostly lady walked on, and in the act of falling on her father's body was interrupted by the pianist, who handed up an immense bouquet, the performers held another hurried colloquy.

"Look here," said the dark-browed villain, stepping forward and addressing John; "what will you take to call it quits?"

"I'll take," said John, "the key which the lady has just handed you. And if the treasure is at all commensurate with the fuss you have been making about it, we'll let bygones be bygones."

Well, it did; and John, having counted it out behind the curtain, came forward and asked the pianist to play "God save the King"; and so, having bowed his guests to the door, took possession of the haunted house and lived in it many years with his bride, in high renown and prosperity.

THREE PHOTOGRAPHS

"PHOTOGRAPH all the prisoners? But why?" demanded Sir Felix Felix-Williams. Old Canon Kempe shrugged his shoulders; Admiral Trewbody turned the pages of the Home Secretary's letter. They sat at the baize-covered table in the Magistrates' Room—the last of the Visiting Justices who met, under the old *régime*, to receive the Governor's report and look after the welfare of the prisoners in Tregarrick County Gaol.

"But why, in the name of common-sense?" Sir Felix persisted.

"I suppose," hazarded the Admiral, "it helps the police in identifying criminals."

"But the letter says '*all* the prisoners.' You don't seriously tell me that anyone wants a photograph to identify Poacher Tresize, whom I've committed a score of times if I've committed him once? And perhaps you'll explain to me this further demand for a 'Composite Photograph' of all the prisoners, male and female. A 'Composite Photograph!'—have you ever seen one?"

"No," the Admiral mused; "but I see what the Home Office is driving at. Someone has been persuading them to test these new theories in criminology the doctors are so busy with, especially in Italy."

"In Italy!" pish'd Sir Felix Felix-Williams.

"My dear Sir Felix, science has no nationality." The Admiral was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and kept a microscope to amuse his leisure.

"It has *some* proper limits, I should hope," Sir Felix retorted. It annoyed him—a Chairman of Quarter Sessions for close upon twenty years—to be told that the science of criminology was yet in its infancy; and he glanced mischievously at the Canon, who might be supposed to have a professional quarrel with scientific men. But the Canon was a wary fighter and no waster of powder and shot.

"Well, well," said he, "I don't see what harm it can do, or what good. If the Home Secretary wants his Composite Photograph, let him have it. The only question is, Have we a photographer who knows how to make one? Or must we send the negatives up to Whitehall?"

. . . . . .

So the Visiting Justices sent for the local photographer and consulted him. And he, being a clever fellow, declared it was easy enough — a mere question of care in superimposing the negatives. He had never actually made the experiment; his clients (so he called his customers) preferring to be photographed singly or in family groups. But he asked to be given a trial, and suggested (to be on the safe side) preparing two or three of these composite prints, between which the Justices might choose at their next meeting.

. . . . . .

This was resolved, and the resolution entered in the minutes; and next day the photographer set

to work. Some of the prisoners resisted and "made faces" in front of the camera, squinting and pulling the most horrible mouths. A female shoplifter sat under protest, because she was not allowed to send home for an evening gown. But the most consented obediently, and Jim Tresize even asked for a copy to take home to his wife.

The Admiral (who had married late in life) resided with his wife and young family in a neat villa just outside the town, where his hobby was to grow pelargoniums. The photographer passed the gate daily on his way to and from the prison, and was usually hailed and catechised on his progress.

His patience with the recalcitrant prisoners delighted the Admiral, who more than once assured his wife that Smithers was an intelligent fellow and quite an artist in his way. "I wonder how he manages it," said Mrs. Trewbody. "He told baby last autumn that a little bird would fly out of the camera when he took off the cap, and everyone allows that the result is most lifelike. But I don't like the idea, and I think it may injure his trade."

The Admiral could not always follow his wife's reasoning. "What is it you dislike?" he asked.

"Well, it's not nice to think of oneself going into the same camera he has been using on those wretched prisoners. It's sentiment, I daresay; but I had the same feeling when he stuck up Harry's photograph in his showcase at the railway station, among all kinds of objectionable persons, and I requested him to remove it.

The Admiral laughed indulgently, being one of

those men who find a charm, even a subtle flattery, in their wives' silliness.

"I agree with you," he said, "that it's not pleasant to be exposed to public gaze among a crowd of people one would never think of knowing. I don't suppose it would actually encourage familiarity; at the same time there's an air of promiscuity about it—I won't say disrespect—which, ahem! jars. But with the prisoners it's different,—my attitude to them is scientific, if I may say so. I look upon them as a race apart, almost of another world, and as such I find them extremely interesting. The possibility of mixing with them on any terms of intimacy doesn't occur. I am aware, my dear," he wound up graciously, "that you women seldom understand this mental detachment, being by nature unscientific, and all the more charming for your prejudices."

. . . . . .

At the next meeting of Justices Smithers the photographer presented himself, and produced his prints with a curious air of diffidence.

"I have," he explained, "brought three for your Worships' selection, and can honestly assure your Worships that my pains have been endless. What puzzles me, however, is that although in all three the same portraits have been imposed, and in the same order, the results are surprisingly different. The cause of these differences I cannot detect, though I have gone over the process several times and step by step; but out of some two dozen experiments I may say that all the results answer pretty closely to one or another of these three types." Mr.

Smithers, who had spent much time in rehearsing this little speech, handed up photograph No. 1; and Sir Felix adjusted his spectacles.

"Villainous!" he exclaimed, recoiling.

The Canon and the Admiral bent over it together.

"Most repulsive!" said the Admiral.

"Here indeed,"—the Canon was more impressive,—"here indeed is an object-lesson in the effects of crime! Is it possible that to *this* Man's passions can degrade his divinely inherited features? Were it not altogether too horrible, I would have this picture framed and glazed and hung up in every cottage home in the land."

"My dear fellow," interrupted Sir Felix, "we cannot possibly let this monstrosity go up to Whitehall as representative of the inmates of Tregarrick Gaol! It would mean an inquiry on the spot. It would even reflect upon *us*. Ours is a decent county, as counties go, and I protest it shall not, with my consent, be injured by any such libel."

Mr. Smithers handed up photograph No. 2.

"This looks better," began Sir Felix; and with that he gave a slight start, and passed the photograph to the Canon. The Canon, too, started, and stole a quick glance at Sir Felix: their eyes met.

"It certainly is singular"—stammered Sir Felix. "I fancied—without irreverence— But you detected it too?" he wound up incoherently.

"May I have a look?" The Admiral peered over the Canon's hand, who, however, did not relinquish the photograph but turned on Smithers with sudden severity.

"I presume, sir, this is not an audacious joke?"

"I assure your Worship——" protested the photographer. "I had some thoughts of tearing it up, but thought it wouldn't be honest."

"You did rightly," the Canon answered; "but, now that we have seen it, I have no such scruple." He tore the print across, and across again. "Even in this," he said, with a glance at the Admiral, who winced, "we may perhaps read a lesson, or at least a warning, that man's presumption in extending the bounds of his knowledge—or, as I should prefer to call it, his curiosity—may—er—bring him face to face with——"

But the Canon's speech tailed off as he regarded the torn pieces of cardboard in his hand. He felt that the others had been seriously perturbed and were not listening: he himself was conscious of a shock too serious for that glib emollient—usually so efficacious—the sound of his own voice. He perceived that it did not impose even on the photographer. An uncomfortable silence fell on the room.

Sir Felix was the first to recover. "Put it in the waste-paper basket: no, in the fire!" he commanded, and turned to Smithers. "Surely between these two extremes——"

"I was on the point of suggesting that your Worships would find No. 3 more satisfactory," the photographer interrupted, forgetting his manners in his anxiety to restore these three gentlemen to their ease. His own discomfort was acute, and he overacted, as a man will who has unwittingly surprised a

State secret and wishes to assure everyone of his obtuseness.

Sir Felix studied No. 3. "This appears to me a very ordinary photograph. Without being positively displeasing, the face is one you might pass in the street any day, and forget."

"I hope it suggests no—no well-known features?" put in the Canon nervously.

"None at all, I think: but see for yourself. To me it seems—although hazy, of course—the kind of thing the Home Office might find helpful."

"It is less distinct than the others." The Admiral pulled his whiskers.

"And for that reason the more obviously composite—which is what we are required to furnish. No, indeed, I can find nothing amiss with it, and I think, gentlemen, if you are agreed, we will forward this print."

. . . . . .

No. 3 was passed accordingly, the photographer withdrew, and the three Justices turned to other business, which occupied them for a full two hours.

But, I pray you, mark the sequel.

Mr. Smithers, in his relief and delight at the Magistrates' approbation, hurried home, fished out a copy of No. 3, exposed it proudly in his shop window, and went off to the Packhorse Inn for a drink.

Less than an hour later, Mrs. Trewbody, having packed her family into the jingle for their afternoon's ride with Miss Platt, the governess, strolled down into the town to do some light shopping; and, happening to pass the photographer's window, came to a standstill with a little gasp.

A moment later she entered the shop; and Mrs. Smithers, answering the shop bell, found that she had taken the photograph from the window and was examining it eagerly.

"This is quite a surprise, Mrs. Smithers. A capital photograph! May I ask how many copies my husband ordered?"

"I'm not aware, ma'am, that the Admiral has ordered any as yet; though I heard Smithers say only this morning as he hoped he'd be pleased with it."

"I think I can answer for that, although he *is* particular. But I happen to know he disapproves of these things being exposed in the window. I'll take this copy home with me, if I may. Has your husband printed any more?"

"Well no, ma'am. There was one other copy; but Lady Felix-Williams happened to be passing just now, and spied it, and nothing would do but she must take it away with her."

"Lady Felix-Williams?" Mrs. Trewbody stiffened with sudden distrust. "Now, what would Lady Felix-Williams want with this?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, ma'am: but she was delighted. 'A capital likeness,' she said; 'I've never seen a photograph before that caught just that expression of his.'"

"I should very much like to know what *she* has to do with his expression," Mrs. Trewbody murmured to herself, between wonder and incipient alarm. But she concealed her feelings, good lady; and, having paid for her purchase, carried it home in her muff and stuck it upright against one of the Sèvres candlesticks on her boudoir mantel-shelf.

And there the Admiral discovered it three-quarters of an hour later. He came home wanting his tea; and, finding the boudoir empty, advanced to ring the bell. At that moment his eyes fell on Smithers' replica of the very photograph he had passed for furtherance to the Home Secretary. He picked it up and gave vent to a long whistle.

"Now, how the dickens——"

His wife appeared in the doorway, with Harry, Dicky, and Theophila clinging to her skirts, fresh from their ride, and boisterous.

"My dear Emily, where in the world did you get hold of this?"

He held the photograph towards her at arm's length, and the children rushed forward to examine it.

"Papa! papa!" they shouted together, capering around it. "Oh, mammy, isn't it him *exactly*?"

THE TALKING SHIPS

HE was a happy boy, for he lived beside a harbour, and just below the last bend where the river swept out of steep woodlands into view of the sea. A half-ruined castle, with a battery of antiquated guns, still made-believe to protect the entrance to the harbour, and looked across it upon a ridge of rocks surmounted by a wooden cross, which the Trinity pilots kept in repair. Between the cross and the fort, for as long as he could remember, a procession of ships had come sailing in to anchor by the great red buoy immediately beneath his nursery window. They belonged to all nations, and hailed from all imaginable ports; and from the day his nurse had first stood him upon a chair to watch them, these had been the great interest of his life. He soon came to know them all—French brigs and *chasse-marées*, Russian fore-and-afters, Dutch billyboys, galliots from the East coast, and Thames hay-barges with vanes and wind-boards. He could tell you why the Italians were deep in the keel, why the Danes were manned by youngsters, and why these youngsters deserted, although their skippers looked, and indeed were, such good-natured fellows; what food the French crews hunted in the seaweed under the cliff, and

when the Baltic traders would be driven southward by the ice. Once acquainted with a vessel, he would recognise her at any distance, though by what signs he could no more tell than we why we recognise a friend.

On his seventh birthday he was given a sailing boat, on condition that he learned to read; but, although he kept by the bargain honestly, at the end of a month he handled her better than he was likely to handle his book in a year. He had a companion and instructor, of course—a pensioner who had left the Navy to become in turn fisherman, yachtsman, able seaman on board a dozen sailing vessels, and now yachtsman again. His name was Billy, and he taught the boy many mysteries, from the tying of knots to the reading of weather-signs; how to beach a boat, how to take a conger off the hook, how to gaff a cuttle and avoid its ink. . . . In return the boy gave him his heart, and even something like worship.

One fine day, as they tacked to and fro a mile and more from the harbour's mouth, whiffing for mackerel, the boy looked up from his seat by the tiller. "I say, Billy, did you speak?"

Billy, seated on the thwart and leaning with both arms on the weather gunwale, turned his head lazily. "Not a word this half-hour," he answered.

"Well now, I thought not; but somebody, or something—spoke just now." The boy blushed, for Billy was looking at him quizzically. "It's not the first time I've heard it, either," he went on; "sometimes it sounds right astern, and sometimes close beside me."

"What does it say?" asked Billy, re-lighting his pipe.

"I don't know that it *says* anything, and yet it seems to speak out quite clearly. Five or six times I've heard it, and usually on smooth days like this, when the wind's steady."

Billy nodded. "That's right, sonny; I've heard it scores of times. And they say. . . . But, there, I don't believe a word of it."

"What do they say?"

"They say that 'tis the voice of drowned men down below, and that they hail their names whenever a boat passes."

The boy stared at the water. He knew it for a floor through which he let down his trammels and crab-pots into wonderland—a twilight with forests and meadows of its own, in which all the marvels of all the fairy-books were possible; but the terror of it had never clouded his delight.

"Nonsense, Billy; the voice I hear is always quite cheerful and friendly—not a bit like a dead man's."

"I tell what I'm told," answered Billy, and the subject dropped.

But the boy did not cease thinking about the voice; and some time after he came, as it seemed, upon a clue. His father had set him to read Shakespeare; and, taking down the first of twelve volumes from the shelf, he began upon the first play, *The Tempest*. He was prepared to yawn, but the first scene flung open a door to him, and he stepped into a new world, a childish Ferdinand roaming an Isle of Voices. He resigned Miranda

to the grown-up prince, for whom (as he saw at a glance, being wise in the ways of story-books) she was eminently fitted. It was in Ariel, perched with harp upon the shrouds of the king's ship, that he recognised the unseen familiar of his own voyaging. "O spirit, be my friend—speak to me often!" As children will, he gave Prospero's island a local habitation in the tangled cliff-garden, tethered Caliban in the tool-shed, and watched the white surf far withdrawn, or listened to its murmur between the lordly boles of the red-currant bushes. For the first time he became aware of some limitations in Billy.

He had long been aware of some serious limitations in his nurse: she could not, for instance, sail a boat, and her only knot was a "granny." He never dreamed of despising her, being an affectionate boy; but more and more he went his own way without consulting her. Yet it was she who—unconsciously and quite as if it were nothing out of the way—handed him the clue.

A flagstaff stood in the garden on a grassy platform, half-way down the cliff-side, and the boy at his earnest wish had been given charge of it. On weekdays, as a rule he hoisted two flags—an ensign on the gaff, and a single code-flag at the mast-head; but on Sundays he usually ran up three or four, and with the help of the code-book spelt out some message to the harbour. Sometimes, too, if an old friend happened to take up her moorings at the red buoy below, he would have her code-letters hoisted to welcome her, or would greet and speed her with such signals as K.T.N., "Glad to see

you," and B.R.D., or B.Q.R., meaning "Good-bye," "A pleasant passage." Skippers fell into the habit of dipping their flags to him as they were towed out to sea, and a few amused themselves while at anchor by pulling out their bags of bunting and signalling humorous conversations, though their topmasts reached so near to the boy's platform that they might with less labour have talked through a speaking-trumpet.

One morning before Christmas six vessels lay below at the buoy, moored stem to stem in two tiers of three; and, after hoisting his signal (C.P.B.H. for "Christmas Eve"), he ran indoors with the news that all six were answering with bushes of holly at their topmast heads, while one—a Danish barquentine—had rove stronger halliards and carried a tall fir-tree at the main, its branches reaching many feet above her truck.

"Christmas is Christmas," said his nurse. "When I was young, at such times there wouldn't be a ship in the harbour without its talking-bush."

"What is a talking-bush?" the boy asked.

"And you pretend to be a sailor! Well, well—not to know what happens on Christmas night when the clocks strike twelve!"

The boy's eyes grew round. "Do—the—ships—talk?"

"Why, of course they do! For my part, I wonder what Billy teaches you."

. . . . . .

Late that evening, when the household supposed him to be in bed, the boy crept down through the moonlit garden to the dinghy which Billy had left

on its frape under the cliff. But for their riding-lights, the vessels at the buoy lay asleep. The crews of the foreigners had turned in; the *Nubian*, of Runcorn, had no soul on board but a night-watchman, now soundly dozing in the forecastle; and the *Touch-me-not* was deserted. The *Touch-me-not* belonged to the port, and her skipper, Captain Tangye, looked after her in harbour when he had paid off all hands. Usually he slept on board; but to-night, after trimming his lamp, he had rowed ashore to spend Christmas with his family—for which, since he owned a majority of the shares, no one was likely to blame him. He had even left the accommodation-ladder hanging over her side, to be handy for boarding her in the morning.

All this the boy had noted; and accordingly, having pushed across in the dinghy, he climbed the *Touch-me-not's* ladder and dropped upon deck with a bundle of rugs and his father's greatcoat under his arm.

He looked about him and listened. There was no sound at all but the lap of tide between the ships, and the voice of a preacher travelling over the water from a shed far down the harbour, where the Salvation Army was holding a midnight service. Captain Tangye had snugged down his ship for the night: ropes were coiled, deckhouses padlocked, the spokes of the wheel covered against dew and frost. The boy found the slack of a stout hawser coiled beneath the taffrail—a circular fort into which he crept with his rugs, and nestled down warmly; and then for half an hour lay listening. But only the preacher's voice broke the silence of the harbour. On—on it went, rising and falling. . . .

Away in the little town the church clock chimed the quarter. "It must have missed striking the hour," thought the boy, and he peered over the edge of his shelter. The preacher's voice had ceased; but another was speaking, and close beside him.

"You'd be surprised," it said, "how simple one's pleasures grow with age. This is the twelfth Christmas I've spent at home, and I assure you I quite look forward to it: that's a confession, eh?—from one who has sailed under Nelson and smelt powder in his time." The boy knew that he must be listening to the *Touch-me-not*, whose keelson came from an old line-of-battle ship. "To be sure," the voice went on graciously, "a great deal depends on one's company."

"Talking of powder," said the *Nubian*, creaking gently on her stern-moorings, "reminds me of a terrible adventure. My very first voyage was to the mouth of a river on the West Coast of Africa, where two native tribes were at war. Somehow, my owner —a scoundrelly fellow in the Midlands—had wind of the quarrel, and that the tribe nearest the coast needed gunpowder. We sailed from Cardiff with fifteen hundred barrels duly labelled, and the natives came out to meet us at the river-mouth and rafted them ashore; but the barrels, if you will believe me, held nothing but sifted coal-dust. Off we went before the trick was discovered, and with six thousand pounds' worth of ivory in my hold. But the worst villainy was to come; for my owner, pretending that he had opened up a profitable trade, and having his ivory to show for it, sold me to a London firm, who

loaded me with real gunpowder and sent me out, six months later, to the same river, but with a new skipper and a different crew. The natives knew me at once, and came swarming out in canoes as soon as we dropped anchor. The captain, who of course suspected nothing, allowed them to crowd on board; and I declare that within five minutes they had clubbed him and every man of the crew and tossed their bodies to the sharks. Then they cut my hawsers and towed me over the river-bar; and, having landed a good half of my barrels, they built and lit a fire around them in derision. I can hear the explosion still; my poor upper-works have been crazy ever since. It destroyed almost all the fighters of the tribe, who had formed a ring to dance around the fire. The rest fled inland, and I never saw them again, but lay abandoned for months as they had anchored me, between the ruined huts and a sandy spit, alive with mosquitoes—until somehow a British tramp-steamer heard of me at one of the trading stations up the coast. She brought down a crew to man and work me home. But my owner could not pay the salvage; so the parties who owned the steamer—a Runcorn firm—paid him fifty pounds and kept me for their services. A surveyor examined me, and reported that I should never be fit for much: the explosion had shaken me to pieces. I might do for the coasting trade—that was all; and in that I've remained."

"Owners are rogues, for the most part," commented the Danish barquentine, rubbing against the *Touch-me-not's* fender as if to nudge her. "There's the *Maria Stella Maris* yonder can tell us a tale of the

food they store us with. She went through a mutiny once, I've heard."

"I'd rather not talk of it," put in the Italian hastily, and a shudder ran through her timbers. "It's a dreadful recollection, and I have that by my mizzen-mast which all the holystone in the world can never scour."

"But I've had a mutiny, too!" said the Dutch galliot, with a voice of great importance; and this time the boy felt sure that the vessels nudged one another.

"It happened," the galliot went on, "between my skipper and his *vrauw*, who was to all purpose our mate, and as good a mate as ever I sailed with. But she would not believe the world was round. The skipper took a Dutch cheese and tried to explain things: he moved the cheese round, as it might be, from west to east, and argued and argued, until at last, being a persevering man, he did really persuade her, but it took a whole voyage, and by the time he succeeded we were near home again, and in the North Sea Canal. The moment she was convinced, what must the woman do but go ashore to an aunt of hers who lived at Zaandam, and refuse to return on board, though her man went on his bended knees to her! 'I will not,' she said; 'and *that's* flat, at any rate.' The poor man had to start afresh, undo every one of his arguments, and prove the earth flat again, before she would trust herself to travel. It cost us a week, but for my part I didn't grudge it. Your cliffs and deep-water harbours don't appeal to me. Give me a canal with windmills and summer-houses

where you can look in on the families drinking tea as you sail by; give me, above all, a canal on Sundays, when the folks walk along the towing-path in their best clothes, and you feel as if you were going to church with them."

"Give me rather," said the Norwegian barque from Christiansund, "a fiord with forests running straight up to the snow mountains, and water so deep that no ship's anchor can reach it."

"I have seen most waters," the Dane announced calmly and proudly. "As you see, I am very particular about my paint, for a ship ought to keep up her beauty and look as young as she can. But I have an ice-mark around my breast which is usually taken for a proof of experience, and as a philosopher I say that all waters are tolerable enough if one carries the talisman."

"But can a ship be beautiful?" and "What is the talisman?" asked the Italian and the *Nubian* together.

"One at a time, please. My dear," she addressed the Italian, "the point is, that men, whom we serve, think us beautiful indeed. It seems strange to us, who carry the thought of the forests we have left; and on warm days, when the sap awakes in us and tries to climb again, forgetting its weakness, we miss the green boughs and the moss at our feet and the birds overhead. But I have studied my reflection often enough in calm weather, and begin to see what men have in mind when they admire us."

"And the talisman?" asked the *Nubian* again.

"The talisman? There is no one cure for use-

less regret, but each must choose his own. With me it is the thought of the child after whom I was christened. The day they launched me was her first birthday, and she a small thing held in the crook of her mother's arm: when the bottle swung against my stem the wine spurted, and some drops of it fell on her face. The mother did not see me take the water—she was too busy wiping the drops away. But it was a successful launch, and I have brought the family luck, while she has brought them happiness. Because of it, and because our names are alike, her parents think of us together; and sometimes, when one begins to talk of 'Thekla,' the other will not know for a moment which of us is meant. They drink my health, too, on her birthday, which is the fourteenth of May; and you know King Solomon's verse for the fourteenth—'She is like the merchants' ships, she bringeth her food from afar.' This is what I have done while she was growing; for King Solomon wrote it for a wife, of course. But now I shall yield up my trust, for when I return she is to be married. She shall bind that verse upon her with a coral necklace I carry for my gift, and it shall dance on her white throat when her husband leads her out to open the wedding-ball."

"Since you are so fond of children," said the *Touch-me-not*, "tell me, what shall we do for the one I have on my deck? He is the small boy who signalled Christmas to us from the garden above; and he dreams of nothing but the sea, though his parents wish him to stick to his books and go to college."

The Dane did not answer for a moment. She was considering. "Wherever he goes," she said at length, "and whatever he does, he will find that to serve much is to renounce much. Let us show him that what is renounced may yet come back in beautiful thoughts."

And it seemed to the boy that, as she ceased, a star dropped out of the sky and poised itself above the fir-tree on her maintopmast; and that the bare mast beneath it put forth branches, while upon every branch, as it spread, a globe of fire dropped from the star, until a gigantic Christmas-tree soared from the deck away up to heaven. In the blaze of it the boy saw the miracle run from ship to ship—the timber bursting into leaf with the song of birds and the scent of tropical plants. Across the avenue of teak which had been the *Nubian's* bulwarks he saw the Dutchman's galley, now a summer-house set in parterres of tulips. Beyond it the sails of the *Maria Stella Maris*, shaken from the yards, were piling themselves into snowy mountains, their foot-ropes and braces trailing down and breaking into leaves and clusters of the vine. He heard the murmur of streams flowing, the hum of bees, the whetting of the scythes—even the stir of insects' wings among the grasses. From truck to keelson the ships were wavering, dissolving part from part into remote but unforgotten hiding-places whence the mastering adventurer had torn them to bind and yoke them in service. Divine the service, but immortal also the longing to return! "But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no

galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."

The boy heard the words; but before he understood them a hand was on his shoulder, and another voice speaking above him.

"God bless us! it's you, is it? Here's a nice tale to tell your father, I must say!" He opened his eyes, and above Captain Tangye's shoulder the branches faded, the lights died out, and the masts stood stripped and bare for service against the cold dawn.

THE KEEPERS OF THE LAMP

IT was in a purple twilight of May that I first saw the lamp shining. For me, a child of seven, the voyage had been a tiring one: it seemed many hours since, with a ringing of bells, and hearts adventurously throbbing with the screw of our small steamboat, we had backed and swung, casting our wash in waves along the quay-walls, and so, after a pause during which we held our breath and drifted from the line of watching faces, had headed away for the great empty sky-line beyond which the islands lay. I knew that they lay yonder; for, the evening before, my father had led me up a tall hill and pointed them out to me—black specks in the red ball of the sun. But to-day, as hour after hour went by with the pant of the engines, the lift and slide of the Atlantic swell, the tonic wind humming against the stays, my eyes grew heavy, and at length my head dropped against my father's shoulder. And then—to me it seemed the next instant—he woke me up and pointed towards the islands as they rose out of the indigo sea. At first they looked rather like low-lying clouds, but after a minute or two there was no mistaking them; for, as if they had just discovered *us*, they hung out lamp after lamp, some steady, some intermittent, but all

of them gleaming yellow along the floor of the sea save one, a crimson light which hid and showed itself again northward of the rest. Crimson was my favourite colour in those days, and even as I dropped back into sleep I decided that I liked this lamp the best of all.

I awoke again to the sound of voices. We were passing a pilot-boat out there on the watch for ships. Her crew hailed us as we went by, and I saw their faces in the green radiance of our starboard light—gaunt, dark faces, altogether foreign. One of the men, the oldest, was bareheaded, with long grey locks, and wore a yellow neckcloth with his shirt open below it, and his naked chest showing. Their voices as they answered our skipper were clear and gay like the voices of children.

And, next, we were alongside a quay. Our seats, our bulwarks, even our decks, shone with dew. A crowd stood on the dim quay-edge and looked down on us, and chattered, but in soft voices. There was a policeman too, and I wondered how *he* came there. Above this shadowy moving crowd rode the stars I had known at home. I took my father's hand. At the head of the gangway he stooped, hoisted me on his shoulders, and carried me up and up through narrow mysterious streets, around dark corners, past belated islanders hurrying down to the steamer; but always upward, until he pushed open a door and set me down blinking in a whitewashed bedroom lit by a couple of candles: and with that came sleep.

Happy days followed: blue and white days—days vaulted and floored with blue, flashing with white granite, with the rush of white water beneath

the shadow of the leaning sail, with white cirrus clouds, with white wings of seabirds. It was the height of the nesting season, and the birds had brought us to the islands; my father with paint-box and camera — though, our time being short, he relied almost wholly on the latter. A naturalist, and by temper the gentlest of men, in his methods he was a born pioneer. You can hardly imagine how cumbrous and well-nigh hopeless a business it was in those days, not so long past, to pursue after wild life with a camera; but a thousand disheartening failures left him still grasping the inviolable shade, still confident that in photography, if it could only be given with rapidity and precision, lay the naturalist's hope. Blurred negatives were all the spoil, and, sorry enough, we bore back after long days of tossing and climbing among the Outer Islands; but we had the reward of living among the birds. They filled our thoughts, our lives for the time:—great cormorants and northern divers, flitting red-legged oyster-catchers, shags spreading their wings to the wind and sun, sea-parrots, murrs, razor-bills, gannets questing by ones and twos—now poised, now dropping like plummets with a resounding splash; sandpipers and curlews dotting the beaches, and wading; tern, common gulls, herring-gulls, and kittiwakes, and, at nightfall, shearwaters popping from their holes and swimming and skimming around our boat as we headed for home. And then, the nests we discovered!—nay, the nests that at times we walked among, picking our steps like egg-dancers!—nests boldly planted on the bare rock ledges; nests snugly hidden among the clusters of

blue thrift and the massed sea-pinks. They bloomed everywhere, these sea-pinks; sheet upon sheet of pale rose-colour, soon to show paler and fade before the rosy splendours of the mesembryanthemum. But the thrift had no rival to fear, condensing blue heaven and blue sea in the flower it lifted against both; and to lie prone and make a frame of it for some winding channel when the tide-rip flashed and tossed was to send the eye plunging into blue like an Eastern diver after pearls.

But when after sunset the blue deepened to violet, always in the heart of it glowed the crimson light upon Off Island. Night after night I watched it from my window, and wondered what manner of people they were who tended it, living out yonder on a rock where no grass grew, and in a roar of tide which the inhabitants of the greater islands heard on still days in the few inland valleys where it was possible to lose sight of the sea. I knew that thousands of puffins bred there, and we were to visit the rock some day; but, what with the tides and an all but ceaseless ground swell, our opportunity was long in coming, and Old Seth (our boatman) kept putting it off until I began to disbelieve in it altogether.

It came, though, at last, with a cloudless morning and a north-easterly breeze, brisk and steady, the clearest day in a fortnight of clear days. We were heading northward close-hauled through a sound dividing two of the greater islands—Old Seth at the tiller, my father tending the sheet, and I perched on the weather gunwale and peering over and down on the purple reefs we seemed to avoid so narrowly

—when Seth lifted his voice in a shout, and then, with a word of warning, paid out sheet, brought the boat's nose round and ran her in towards a silver-white beach on our left. As we downed sail, I saw a girl on the bank above the beach, leaning on a hoe and gazing at us over a low hedge of veronica.

Seth hailed her again, and she came running to the waterside. There she stood and eyed us shyly: a dark-haired girl, bare-headed, and with the dust of the potato-patch on her shoes and ankles.

"Any message for Reub Hicks, my dear? We'm bound over to Off Island."

She hesitated, looking from Seth to us; and while she hesitated a flush mounted to her tanned face and deepened there.

"Come," Old Seth coaxed her, "you needn' be afeard to trust us with your little secrets."

She seemed, at all events, to have made up her mind to trust us. From the pocket of her skirt she drew a tattered, paper-covered book, opened it, and was about to tear out a couple of pages, but paused.

"I'd like to send it," said she; but still paused, and at length passed the open book to Seth.

"I see." He nodded. "Seems a pity—don't it?—to tear up good printed stuff. Tell 'ee what," he suggested: "you leave me take the book over as 'tis, and this evenin', if you'll be waitin' here, I'll bring it back safe."

She brightened at once. "That'll do brave. Tell 'en I hope he's keepin' well, and give my love to the others."

"Right you are," promised Seth cheerfully, pushing off.

"And don't you forget!" she called after us.

Seth laughed. "That's a very good girl, now," he commented as he settled himself to the tiller again. "Must be a poor job courtin' with a light-house man: not much walkin' together for they. No harm, I s'pose, in your seein' the maid's book." He handed it to my father, who shook his head.

"Aw," went on Seth, guessing why he hesitated, "there's no writin' in it—only print." He held the book open. It was a nautical almanack, and night by night the girl had pencilled out the hour of sunset. Night by night the first flash of the Off Island lamp carried her lover's message to her, and, as Seth explained (but it needed no explanation), at that signal she blotted out yet one more of the days between her and the marriage day.

Off Island rose from the sea a sheer mass of granite, about a hundred and fifty feet in height, and all but inaccessible had it not been for a rock stair-way hewn out by the Brethren of the Trinity House. The keepers had spied our boat, and a tall young man stood on one of the lower steps to welcome us: not Reuben, but Reuben's younger brother Sam. Reuben met us at the top of the staircase, where the puffins built so thickly that a false step would almost certainly send the foot crashing through the roof of one of their oddly shaped houses. He too was a tall youth; an inch or two taller, maybe, than his brother, whom we had left in charge of the boat. It would have puzzled you to guess their ages. Young they surely were, but much gazing in the face of the salt wind had creased the corners of their eyes, and their faces wore a beautiful gravity, as though

they had been captured young and dedicated to some priestly service.

Reuben touched his cap, and, taking the book from Seth without a word, led us to the cottage, where his mother stood scouring a deal table: a little woman with dark eyes like beads, and thin grey hair tucked within a grey muslin cap. She had kilted her gown high and tucked up her sleeves, and looked to me, for all the world, like a doll on a penwiper. But her hands were busy continually; the small room shone and gleamed with her tireless cleansing and polishing; and in the midst of it her eyes sparkled with expectation of news from the outer world.

Seth understood her, and rattled at once into a recital of all the happenings on the islands: births, marriages, and deaths, sickness, courtship, and boat-building, the price of market-stuff, and the names of vessels newly arrived in the roads. But after a minute she turned from him to my father.

"'Tis all so narrow, sir—Seth's news. I want to know what's happenin' in the world."

Now, much was happening in those May weeks—much all over Europe, but much indeed in France, where Paris was passing through the sharp agonies of the Commune. The latest my father had to tell was almost a week old; but two days before we set sail for the islands the Versaillais troops had swept the boulevards, and every steamer had brought newspapers from the mainland. Mrs. Hicks' eyes grew bigger and rounder as she listened; but she had listened a very short while before she cried—

"Father must hear this! He's up polishin' the

lantern, sir. Begging your pardon, but he must hear you tell it; he must indeed." With immense pride she added, "He was over to France, one time."

She marched us off to the lantern, up the winding stairway, up the ladder, and into the great glass cage, where stood an old man busily polishing the brass reflector.

"Father, here's a gentleman come, with news from France!"

As the old man came forward with a fumbling step, my father drew a thick bundle from his coat pocket. "I've brought you some newspapers," said he; "they will tell you more than I can."

He held them out, but the wife interposed hurriedly. "Not to him, sir. Give them to Reuben, if you please, and thank you. But he, sir—he's blind."

I looked, as my father looked. A film covered both pupils of the old man's eyes.

"He've been blind these seven years," Reuben explained in a low voice. "Me and Sam are the regular keepers now; but the Board lets him live on here, and he's terrible clever at polishing."

"He knows the lamp so well as ever he did," broke in the old woman; "the leastest little scratch, he don't miss it. How he doesn' break his poor neck is more'n I can tell; but he don't—though 'tis a sore trial."

While they explained, the old man's hand went out to caress the lamp, but stopped within an inch of the sparkling lenses.

"Iss," said he musingly, "with this here cataract I misses a brave lot. There's a lot to be seen up

here, for a man with eyesight. Will 'ee tell me, please sir, what's the news from France? I was over there, one time."

It turned out he had once paid a visit to one of the small Breton ports: Roscoff I think it was, and have a suspicion that smuggling lay at the bottom of the business there.

"Well now," he commented as my father told something of his tale, "I wouldn' have thought it of the Johnnies. They treated me very pleasant, and I speak of a man as I find en." He turned his sightless eyes on the family he had brought up to think well of Frenchmen.

"They are different folk in Paris."

"Iss, that's a big place. Cherbourg's a big place, too, they tell me. I came near going there, one time; but my travellin's over. It *do* give a man something to think over, though. I wish my son here could have travelled a bit before settlin' down."

But Reuben, on the far side of the lantern, was turning the pages of the tattered almanack.

"Well-a-well!" said the old woman. "A body must be thankful for good sons, and mine be that. But I'd love to end my days settin' in a window and watchin' folks go by to church."

. . . . . .

It was past seven o'clock when we hoisted sail again, and as we drew near the greater islands a crimson flash shot out over the sea in our wake. On a dim beach ahead stood a girl waiting.

TWO BOYS

I DARESAY they never saw, and perhaps never will see, one another. I met them on separate railway journeys, and the dates are divided by five years almost. One boy was travelling third-class, the other first. The age of each when I made his very slight acquaintance (with the one I did not even exchange a word) was about fourteen. Almost certainly their lives and their stories have no connection outside of my thoughts. But I think of them often, and together. They have grown up; the younger will be a man by this time; if I met them now, their altered faces would probably be quite strange to me. Yet the two boys remain my friends, and that is why I take leave to include them among these stories of my friends.

I

The first boy (I never heard his name) was seated in the third-class smoking-carriage when I joined my train at Plymouth; seated beside his mother, an over-heated countrywoman in a state of subsiding fussiness. We had a good five minutes to wait, but, as such women always will, she had made a bolt for the first door within reach. Of course she found

herself in a smoking compartment, and of course she disliked tobacco, but could not, although she made two false starts, make up her mind to change. She had dropped upon one of the middle seats and dragged her boy down into the next, thus leaving me the only vacant corner. The others were occupied by a couple of drovers and a middle-aged man with a newspaper, which he read column by column, advertisements and all, without raising his eyes for a moment.

The guard just outside the carriage door had his whistle to his lips, and his green flag lifted ready to wave, when the woman asked—"Can anyone tell me if this train goes to London?"

The drovers and I assured her that it did.

"It stops at Bristol, doesn't it? My ticket is for Bristol."

The train was in motion by this time. We set her mind at ease. She opened a limp basket (called a "frail" I believe), produced an apple and offered it to the boy. He shook his head.

He was a passably good-looking coltish boy, in a best suit which he had outgrown, and a hard black hat, the brim of which annoyed him when he leaned back. A binding of black braid advertised what it was meant to conceal—that the cuffs of his jacket had been lengthened; yet as he sat with his hands crossed in his lap he displayed a deal of wrist.

His eyes took my liking at once; eyes of a good grey-black—or, shall I say, of a grey with fine glooms in it. They looked at you straight but without staring; neither furtively nor with embarrassment, nor curiously, nor again sleepily, but with that

rare blend of candour and reserve which allowed you to see that he was thinking his own thoughts, and had no reason to be ashamed of them. Having taken stock of us, he gazed thoughtfully out of window. His mother sighed from time to time, and searched her basket to make sure that this, that, or the other trifle had not been left behind. The drovers conversed apart; the middle-aged man (who sat facing the engine) read away pertinaciously at his newspaper, which he kept folded small by reason of the strong southerly breeze playing in through the open window; and I divided my attention between the landscape and the map at the beginning of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*—then barely a week old, a delight to be approached with trepidation.

So we were sitting when the train crawled over the metals beyond Teignmouth Station, gathered speed, and swung into full view of the open sea. As the first strong breath of it came rushing in at the window I heard a shuffle of feet. The boy had risen, and with his eyes was asking our leave to stand by the door. I drew in my knees to make way for him, and so, after a moment, did the middle-aged man. He did not thank us, but stepped past politely enough and stood with his hand on the leathern window-strap. I stared out of the little side window, wondering what had caught his attention.

And while I wondered, suddenly the child broke into song!

It was the queerest artless performance: it had no tune in it, no intelligible words—it was just a chant rising and falling as the surf at the base of the sea-

wall boomed and tossed its spray on the wind fanning his face. And while he chanted, his serious eyes devoured the blue leagues right away to the horizon.

The drovers at the far end of the compartment turned their faces inward and grinned. The middle-aged man looked across at me behind the boy's back with half a smile and resumed his reading. The mother laughed apologetically—

"'Tis his way. He won't be so crazed for it in a few weeks' time, I reckon. He's goin' up to Bristol to be bound apprentice to his uncle. His uncle's master of a sailing ship."

But the boy did not hear. There are four or five tunnels in the red sandstone between Teignmouth and Dawlish, and through these he sang on in a low repressed voice, which broke out high and clear and strong as we swept again into the large wind and sunshine. At Dawlish Station we drew up for a minute, and a porter on the up platform nodded to one of the drovers and asked, "What's the matter with 'ee, in there?" "Nothin', nothin'; we've got a smokin'-concert on," said the drover. Across the rails a group waiting for the down train stood and stared at the boy, whispered, and smiled; and I can still recall the fascinated gaze of a plump urchin of six as he gripped with one hand a wooden spade and with the other his mother's skirt.

But the boy sang on heedless, and still sang on as we left Dawlish behind. There was no jubilation in his chant, but through it all there ran and rang out from time to time a note of high challenge. Perhaps I read too much in it; for in the heart of a boy

many thoughts sing together before they come to birth,—and to the destinies we see so distinctly he marches through a haze, drawn onward by incommunicable yearnings. But as, unseen by him, I glanced up at his blown hair and eager parted lips, the chant seemed to grow articulate—

"O Sea, I am coming! O fate, waiting and waited for, I salute you! Friend or adversary, we meet to try each other: for your wonders I have eyes, for your trials a heart. Use me, for I am ready!"

As we turned inland and ran beside the shore of the Exe, his song died down and ceased. For a while he stood conning the river, the boats, the red cliffs and whitewashed towns on the farther bank; and so, as we came in sight of the cathedral towers, stepped back and dropped into his seat.

"Well now," said his mother, "you *be* a funny boy!"

For a moment he did not seem to hear; then started and came out of his day-dream with a furious blush. I looked away.

II

The second boy wore a well-cut Eton suit, and sat in the smoking compartment of a padded corridor carriage, with a silk-lined overcoat beside him and a silver-mounted suit-case in the rack above. He was not smoking, nor was he reading; but he sat on a great pile of papers and magazines, and stared straight in front of him—that is to say, straight at me.

His stare, though constant and unrelenting, was

not in the least offensive—it had no curiosity in it: he had obviously been contemplating the cushions before I intruded, and since I had chosen to occupy his field of vision he contemplated me.

I had no speaking acquaintance with the boy; but he bore the features of his family, and his initials were on the suit-case above. So I knew him for the only son of a man who had once shown me civility, the youngest and least extravagantly wealthy of three rich brothers. Since one of these brothers had never married and now was not likely to, it lay beyond guessing what wealth the boy would inherit some day.

He was by no means ill-looking, and quite certainly no fool. His face carried the stamp of his father's ability. It puzzled me what he could be doing with that pile of papers and magazines; or why, having burdened himself with them, he should choose to sit and stare instead of reading them. For his station lay but a twenty minutes' run below mine, and it was impossible that in the time he could have glanced through the half of them.

He had been staring at me, or through me, maybe for half an hour, when our train slowed down and came to a standstill above the steep valley between Bodmin Road and Doublebois. After a couple of minutes' wait, the boy rose and went to the window in the corridor to see what was happening; and I took this opportunity to glance across at the papers scattered on the vacant seat. They included three or four sixpenny and threepenny magazines; a large illustrated paper (*Black and White*, I think); half

a dozen penny weeklies—*Tit-bits*, *Answers*, *Pearson's Weekly*, *Cassell's Saturday Journal*; I forget what others: halfpenny papers in a heap—all kinds of *Cuts*, *Snippets*, *Siftings*, *Echoes*, *Snapshots*, and *Sidelights*; *Pars about People*, *Christian Sweepings*, *Our Happy Fireside*, and *The Masher*. Many lay face downward, coyly hiding their titles but disclosing such headlines as "Facts about the Flag," "Books which have influenced the Bishop of London," "He gave 'em Fits!" "Our Unique Competition," "Mr. Cecil Rhodes: a Powerful Personality," "What becomes of old Stage Scenery."

In the midst of my survey the train began to move forward again, and the boy came back to his seat.

"It's only some platelayers on the viaduct," he explained. "They held up their flag against us. I suppose they were just finishing a job."

"Nasty place to leave the rails," said I, glancing over the parapet upon the green tree-tops fifty feet below us."

"I was thinking that," said he, and a queer tremor in his young voice made me glance at him sharply. Then suddenly I understood—or thought I did.

"You, at any rate, are pretty well insured," said I.

"Twenty thousand pounds, and a little over: the coupons cost four and twopence altogether, and then at the end of the journey you can use up all the reading."

"Wonderful!" I kept a serious face. "And I suppose all this time you've been staring at me, amazed by the recklessness of your elders."

He flushed slightly. "Have I been staring? I

beg your pardon, I'm sure: it's a trick I have. I begin thinking of things, and then——"

"Thinking, I suppose, of how it would feel to be in a collision, or what it would be like to leap such a parapet as that and find ourselves dropping—dropping—into space? But you shouldn't, really. It isn't healthy in a boy like you: and if you'll listen to one who has known what nerves are, it may too easily grow to mean something worse."

"But it isn't that — exactly," he protested; "though of course all that comes into it. I'm not a—a funk, sir! I was thinking more of the —of what would come *afterwards*, you know."

"Oh dear!" I groaned to myself. "It's worse than ever: here's a little prig worrying about his soul. I shouldn't advise you to trouble about that, either," I said aloud.

"But I don't *trouble* about it." He hesitated, and stumbled into a burst of confidence. "You see, I'm no good at games—athletics and that sort of thing——"

Again he stopped, and I nodded to encourage him.

"And I'm no swell at schoolwork, either. I went to school late, and after home it all seems so *young* —if you understand?"

I thought I did. With his polite grown-up manner I could understand his isolation among the urchins, the masters, and all the interests of an ordinary school.

"But my father—you know him, don't you?—he's disappointed about it. He'd like me to bring home prizes or cups. I don't think he'd mind what it was, so long as he could be proud about it.

Of course he never *says* anything: but a fellow gets to know."

"I daresay you're right," I said. "But what has this to do with insuring yourself for twenty thousand pounds?"

"Well, you see, I'm to go into the Bank some day: and I expect my father thinks I shall be just as big a duffer at that. I know he does. But I'm not, if he'd only trust me a bit. So now if we were to smash up—collide, go off the rails, run over a bridge, or something of that sort—just think how he'd feel when he found out I'd cleared twenty thousand by it!"

"So that's what you were picturing to yourself?"

He nodded. "That, and the smash, and all. I kept saying, 'Now—if it comes this moment?' And I wondered a little how it would take *you* suddenly: whether you'd start up or fall forward—and if you would say anything."

"You are a cheerful companion!"

He grinned politely. "And afterwards — just before the train stopped I had a splendid idea. I began making my will. You see, I know something about investments. I read about them every day."

"In the *Boy's Own Paper?*"

"We take in the *Standard* in our school library, and I have it all to myself unless there's a war on. I've heard my father say often that it's a very reliable paper, and so it is, for I've tried it for two years now. So if I left a will telling just how the twenty thousand ought to be invested, it would open my father's eyes more than ever."

"My dear sir," said I, "don't be in a hurry. Serve out your time among the barbarians at school, and I'll promise you in time your father's respectful astonishment."

. . . . . .

These were my two boys; and you may wonder why I always think of them together. I do, though: and, what is more, I find that together they help to explain to me my country's greatness.

THE SENIOR FELLOW

THERE is at Oxford a small college, with a small bursar's garden that in spring is ablaze with laburnum and scented with lilac; and in the old wall of this garden, just beneath the largest laburnum-tree, you may still find a stone with this inscription: "*Jesus have mercy on Miles Tonken, Fellow. A° 1545.*"

This college, in the days when I knew it, had three marks of distinction:—It turned out, on hunting mornings, more "pinks" for its size than any other in Oxford; its boat was head of the river; and its Senior Fellow was the Rev. Theobald Pumfrey, who knew more of Athenæus than any man in the world. He seldom lectured; but day by day, year after year, sat in the window above this same small garden, and accumulated notes for the great edition of his pet author that some day—nobody quite knew when—was to make him famous. He was the son of a Cumberland farmer; had come up to the University from a local grammar-school; and since then (it was said) had revisited his native village twice only—to bury his father and mother. His mother's death—and that had happened five-and-twenty years before—left him without a single relative on earth: nor could he be said to have a

friend, even among the dons. He rose early, took a solitary walk in the parks, and would spend the rest of the day at his desk by the window. People marvelled sometimes why he had taken Holy Orders. It was hinted that his scout knew, perhaps; but, if so, his scout never divulged the reasons.

The scholar was a man, nevertheless; had a humorously wrinkled mouth, and an eye that twinkled responsive to a jest; and was the best judge of wine in Oxford. On the strength of this undeniable gift the dons had long since elected him steward of Common-room; and he valued the responsibility, abstaining from tobacco—which he loved—to keep pure his taste for vintages, and preserve a discriminating palate among sweets. An utterance of his would hint that even his avoidance of physical exercise was a matter of duty.

"A man," he said, "may work his body, may work his head, and may enjoy his dinner. Any two of these things he may do, but not all three. For me, I wish to work my head, and *must* enjoy my dinner." And once, when I dined with him, it was made clear to me that his life was ordered after a plan. It was a summer evening, and he held a glass of claret against the sunset. "Wife and children!" he cried suddenly, "wife and children!" Then, with a wave of his left hand from the claret to the still lawn below us and the lilacs, "These are my wife and children!"

It was whispered at length that his commentary on the first book of the Deipnosophists was all but ready. All through a golden summer and a quiet Long Vacation it had been maturing, and on

the first night of the October term he arranged his piles of notes about him, set a quire of clean manuscript paper on his table, dipped pen in inkpot, and began to muse on the first sentence.

. . . . . .

An hour passed, and the page was not soiled. Across the still garden came the sound of cab-wheels rattling over the distant streets. The undergraduates were coming up for a fresh term. He had heard the sound a hundred times, almost; and it did not concern him. He had no lectures to prepare.

Another hour passed, and another. The noise of the cabs had died out, and over him was creeping a sick fear, a certainty, that he could not write a word. The subject was too immense. He had given his life to Athenæus, and now Athenæus was a monster that one man's life and knowledge would not suffice for. Having withheld his pen till he might write adequately, he awoke to find that writing was impossible. A horror took him as he pushed back his chair among the litter of note-books, and, stepping to the window, threw the sash open.

Many stars were shining; and between them and the sleeping garden echoed the clamour of a distant supper-party. He heard no words, only the noise; but it filled his brain with a sense of the many thousand supper-parties that the garden had listened to, of the generations that had come and gone since his own first term, of the boys who had grown into men while he was working at Athenæus—always Athenæus. His forehead was burning, and as he

pushed his hand across it, he seemed to read in the darkness under the laburnum-tree, "*Jesus have mercy on Miles Tonken, Fellow. A° 1545*," and found a new meaning—an irony—in the words.

Then, because more and more the task of his life became a hopeless weight, he gave a look at his notebooks and escaped out of the room, downstairs into the fresh air of the quad, and across it towards the porter's lodge. He found the porter napping, and, having a private key, he let himself through the big gate and out into the street. No soul was abroad: only the gas-lamps threw queer shadows of him on the pavement, and the night-breeze struck coldly into him as he hurried along, hating whatever he saw.

Soon, under a window in St. Giles's, he pulled up. There was a party of young men inside—perhaps the same supper-party whose voices he had heard just now. The light from the room flared across the street; but by keeping close under the sill he stood in darkness, and he paused, listening eagerly. Above, they were singing a chorus, noted in those days—

. . . . . .

It was pale dawn, and the sun was touching St. Mary's spire into flame when the heavy-eyed porter heard a key turn in the wicket. It was the Senior Fellow, and in about half an hour he appeared again at the lodge, carrying a small bag, and handed the porter a letter addressed to the President of the College. He then stepped out into the street, and hurried off towards the railway station.

For a fortnight we heard nothing of him. Then

suddenly he appeared again—on an evening when the College, having won the "Fours," was commemorating its success by a bonfire in the big quad. A certain freshman, stealing down his staircase with a can of colza oil to feed the flames, was confronted by our missing Senior Fellow.

"No," said the great scholar, "don't be afraid, and don't seek to hide that oil-can; but come in here." And he led the way to his room.

This much is mere rumour; for the freshman was always reticent on the encounter, and what followed. But many who were present that night can bear witness that a big portmanteau appeared suddenly on the summit of the bonfire, and blazed merrily to ashes, having clearly been saturated with oil. Not until long after were its contents divined.

. . . . . .

The Senior Fellow went back to his window above the bursar's garden, though henceforward he dined but rarely in Common-room; and year by year scholars expected his edition of Athenæus, until he died and left his desk full of notebooks to the youth who had carried the oil-can, and who in course of years had become junior don. Also his will expressed a wish that this, his favourite pupil, might be elected to succeed him as steward of Common-room.

The new steward, eager to fulfil his duties, made it his first business to inspect the college cellars. He found there abundance of old port, much fair claret, a bin of inestimable Madeira, several casks of more curious wines, and among them one labelled "For the Poor."

It struck him as a pleasant trait in his dead friend, thus to have dispensed in charity that wine which doubtless had gone beyond its age, and become unfit for the Fellows' palates. He drew a glassful and tasted it.

The first sip was a revelation. He returned to his rooms, wrote a score of letters inviting to dinner all the acknowledged connoisseurs of other colleges. When they had dined with him, and fallen into easy attitudes around the table, he introduced this wine casually among half a dozen others, and watched the result.

Not a man who tasted it would taste any other.

As for the notebooks—those priceless materials for the final edition of Athenæus—they were empty, mere blank pages! Only in that labelled "No. 1" was there a scrap of the old scholar's handwriting, and it began—

"Dulce cum sodalibus
Sapit vinum bonum:
Osculari virgines
Dulcius est donum:
Donum est dulcissimum
Musica tironum—
Qui tararaboomdeat,
Spernit regis thronum!"

BALLAST

UNDER the green shore that faces the port, and at a point that, as the meeting-place of river and harbour, may be called indifferently by either name, lay a slim-waisted barque at anchor, with a sand-barge alongside. The time was a soft and sunny morning in early January—a day that was Nature's breathing space after a week of sleet and boisterous winds. The gulls were back again from their inland shelters. Across the upland above the cliff a ploughman drove leisurably forth and back, and always close behind his heels the earth was white with these birds inspecting the fresh-turned furrow. The furze-bushes below him were braided with cobwebs, and the stays, lifts, and braces of the barque might have passed also for threads of gossamer spun from her masts and yards, so delicately were the lines indicated against the hillside. In the sand-barge, three men were chanting as they worked; and their song, travelling across still sky and water, rose audibly above the stir of traffic even in the narrow streets of the town.

The barque was taking in ballast; and the three men sang as they shovelled,—for three reasons. It helped them to keep time; it kept each from shirking his share of the work; and lastly, perhaps, the

song cheered them. They knew it as "The Long Hundred," and it ran—

"There goes one.
One there is gone.
Oh, the rare one!
And many more to come
For to make up the sum
Of the hundred so long.

There goes two—"

—and so on, up to twenty. With each line, a shovelful of ballast was pitched on board by every man; so that, when the twenty six-line stanzas were ended, each man had thrown one hundred and twenty (a "long hundred") shovelfuls of sand. Thereupon they paused, "touched pipe" for a minute or two, and, brushing the back of the hand across their foreheads to wring off the sweat, started afresh.

Along the barque's side ran a narrow line of blue paint, signifying that the vessel was in mourning, that somebody belonging to captain or owner was lately dead. But in this case it was the captain and owner himself: and his chief mourner was a bright-eyed woman with a complexion of cream and roses, who now leant over the bulwarks and looked down contemplatively upon the three labourers. She was a Canadian, and her husband, too, had been a Canadian—rich, more than twice her age, and luxurious. Since his marriage she had accompanied him on all his voyages. Three months ago his vessel had brought him, sick and suffering from congestion of the lungs, into this harbour, where his cargo of timber was to be unloaded: and in this harbour, a week later, he had

died, without a doubt of his wife's affection. From the deck where she stood she could see between the elms on the hill above the port the white wall of the cemetery where he lay. The vessel was hers, and a snug little fortune in Quebec: and she was going back to enjoy it. For the homeward voyage she had deputed the captain's responsibilities to the first mate, and had raised his pay slightly, but the captain's dignity she reserved for herself.

She wore a black gown, of course, but not a widow's cap: and, though in fact a widow of twenty-five, had very much more the appearance of a maid of nineteen as she looked down over the barque's side. Her lips were parted as if to smile at the first provocation. On either side of her temples a short brown curl had rebelled and was kissing her cheek. The sparkle in her eyes told of capacity to enjoy life. Behind her a coil of smoke rose from the deck-house chimney. She had left the midday meal she was cooking, and ought to be back looking after it. Instead, she lingered and looked upon the three men at work below.

Two of them were old, round-shouldered with labour, their necks burnt brown with stooping in the sun. The third was a young giant—tall, fair, and straight—with yellowish hair that curled up tightly at the back of his head, and lumbar muscles that swelled and sank in a pretty rhythm as he pitched his ballast and sang—

> "There goes nine.
> Nine there is gone . . ."

It was upon this man that the woman gazed as

she lingered. His shirt-collar was cut low at the back, and his freckled neck was shining with sweat. She wanted him to look up, and yet she was afraid of his looking up. She wondered if he were married —"at his age," she phrased it to herself—and, if so, what manner of wife he had. She told herself after a while that she really dreaded extremely being caught observing these three labourers; that she hated even in seeming to lose dignity. And still she bent and heard the song to the twentieth and last verse.

The young giant, when the spell was over, leant on his shovel for a moment and then reached out a hand for the cider-keg. One of his comrades passed it to him. He wiped the orifice, tilted his head back and drank as a man drinks at midday after a long morning. Some of the cider trickled down his crisp yellow beard and he shook his head, scattering the drops off. Then the keg was tilted again, and suddenly lowered as he was on the point of drinking. His eyes had encountered those of the woman on deck.

As they did so, the woman recovered all her boldness. Without in the least knowing what prompted her, she bent a little further forward and asked—

"What is your name, young man?"

"William Udy, ma'am."

"Do you mind breaking off work for a moment and stepping up here?"

"Cert'nly, ma'am." William Udy laid down his shovel at once.

A shiver of fear went through the young widow.

Why had she asked him up? Why, on a mere impulse; because she wanted to see him closer—nothing more. What possible excuse could she give? She heard the sound of his heavy boots on the ship's ladder: he would be before her in a moment, expecting, of course, to be set to work on some odd job or other. She cast about wildly and could think of no job that wanted doing. It was appalling: she could not possibly explain——

As has happened before now to women, her very weakness saved her in extremity. William Udy, clambering heavily over the ship's side, found her leaning against the deck-house, with a face as white as the painted boards against which her palm rested.

"What be I to do, ma'am?" he inquired, after a pause, and then added slowly, "Beggin' your pardon, but be you taken unwell?"

"Yes," she panted, speaking very faintly, "I was over there—by the bulwarks, and suddenly—I felt queer—a faintness—I looked over and saw you—I called the first person I saw. I wanted help."

William Udy was puzzled. He had not noticed any pallor in the face that had looked down on him from the ship's side. On the contrary, he seemed to remember that it struck him as remarkably fresh and rosy. But he saw no reason for doubting he had been mistaken.

"Can I do aught for 'ee? Fetch a doctor?"

"If you wouldn't mind helping me down—down to my cabin——"

William took her arm gently and led her aft to the companion ladder. At the top of it she put out a hand vaguely and closed her eyes.

"I don't think," she murmured, "that I can walk. My head is going round so. Could you—would it be too heavy—if you carried me?"

At any other time William would have considered this a good joke. As it was he took her up like a feather in his arms and carried her down to the cabin. There he set her down on the sofa and was about to withdraw, blushing. He was a very shy youth and had never carried a woman before, let alone one who was his superior in station.

"Thank you," she said in a voice that was little above a whisper. "How easily you carried me. It's plain to see you're a married man."

William started. "There you're wrong, ma'am, pardon me for sayin' it."

"No? You were so gentle: so gentle although so big"—she smiled faintly. "Would you mind stepping to the cupboard there and pouring me out a wineglassful of sherry? It's in the decanter just inside."

William poured out a glassful and set it on the table in front of her. She put it to her lips, and having scarcely moistened them, set it down again.

"A glass for yourself," she said. "Come now—do! I see you are shocked at the number of bottles I keep here. But they were my husband's. He died, you know, a week after we came into harbour."

William's face worked to express mute sympathy.

"It's a fearful responsibility," she went on, "being left alone like this with a vessel to look after, and all his property waiting over there, on the other side of the water; and I daresay the lawyers, there, waiting, too, to take advantage of me. I think it's

having all this on my mind that makes my head so giddy at times. . . ."

William stood opposite to her, and thought. It is not known at what moment the brilliant idea struck him, that as a husband he might be a tower of strength to the fragile young creature on the sofa. His comrades after waiting some time for him began their chant again—

> "There goes one.
> One there is gone . . ."

And while they sang it William began that courtship which ended, three weeks later, in his sailing for Canada. He went as a bridegroom; or, perhaps (if we must reckon him as part of the ship's equipment), as ballast.

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